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**THE STORY  
OF FRENCH PAINTING**







PORTRAIT OF FRANCIS I

LOUVRE

JEAN CLOUET

# THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

BY  
**CHARLES H. CAFFIN**

AUTHOR OF  
“HOW TO STUDY PICTURES”  
“THE STORY OF DUTCH PAINTING”  
“THE STORY OF SPANISH PAINTING”  
ETC.



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TO  
MY CRITIC, COUNSELOR  
AND HELPMATE  
C. C.



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## FOREWORD

WHILE this book discusses a number of individual painters, it makes no pretension to encyclopedic completeness. It is primarily concerned with principles. It aims to trace the evolution of French painting as it has been affected by outside influences and has been shaped by the genius of the French race. Nor does it view the subject as an isolated phenomenon of French culture. It aims to correlate the growth of French painting with the changes in the social and political life of the nation and with the manifestations of the *esprit gaulois* in other departments of intellectual and artistic activity, particularly in that of literature.

For as a leader in intellectual and artistic culture France has maintained her ascendancy since the beginning of the sixteenth century. Paris during the late century has been to the modern world the clearing-house of artistic methods and ideals.

The Story of French Painting is, therefore, in a large measure the recapitulation of the varying motives and methods of painting in the modern world. It has a

## FOREWORD

special interest for us in America, since our painters are handing on to others the principles which they derived from their studentship in Paris. It is true that there is an attempt to substitute for the influence of Paris that of Rome, where an American School of Fine Arts has been established. But this is, I venture to believe, a reactionary move; a grasping of the dead hand of the Italian Renaissance instead of a living companionship with what is alive in modern progress.

The latter involves, it is to be admitted, much that is intellectually and artistically confused and tentative. But the student is himself a part of the progress and must face the issue and assist in clearing its confusion and establishing it on a basis of stability and permanence. He cannot, if he is alive to the modern spirit, afford to play the ostrich.

It goes without saying, however, that the part of the story most difficult to write and to estimate deals with the manifestations of the near present, which as yet we are compelled to view without the advantage of a lengthened perspective. How far these manifestations represent elements of vital growth and embody something durable and sound amid the flux of change must, in the nature of the case, be largely a matter of conjecture.

There is no finality in human development; therefore a story such as this must necessarily conclude with a ragged edge. It can but bring up to date the unfinished

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recital of French development; the latest chapter in the life of a nation that is still very much alive and is moving with the times; that has its roots in a long past of its own and is a-quiver with the modern spirit.

For the French have been the only race since the Italians of the Renaissance and the Greeks of antiquity to whom art in its various forms is a natural and inevitable expression of what is for the time being their attitude toward life.

CHARLES H. CAFFIN.

New York,

September, 1911.



# **THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING**



# THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

## CHAPTER I

### THE BACKGROUND

THE accession of Francis I in 1515 presents a convenient starting point for the study of French painting provided one looks back as well as forward. For it was at this period of coming into touch with the Italian Renaissance that modern France emerged from mediævalism. On the other hand, it must not be overlooked that there was a vigorous growth of French painting before the arrival of Italian influence and that the latter, while it stimulated, never submerged the French genius. France indeed, through all the vicissitudes of her development, has preserved her Northern rather than her Mediterranean traits.

For the French nation has been too exclusively identified with the Latin race. It is true that the French language has its roots in the Latin; that the Roman occupation left an indelible mark upon the race and its institutions, particularly in the South, and that after the fall of the Roman Empire the Roman Catholic Church preserved the tradition of Latin civilization. But the

## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

forms of the language, its idioms, and essential spirit are non-Latin, while very far from being undiluted Latin, is the race itself.

The race, originally Celtic and Ligurian, had been infused with Gallic, and nearly six centuries before the appearance of Cæsar, Marseilles and other Greek colonies had been planted along the shores of the Mediterranean. It was with this already mixed strain that during the first four hundred years of the Christian era the Latin blood was mingled. Then followed successive invasions of German tribes, Franks, Allemans, Goths, and Burgundians.

In 485 Clovis the Frank established dominion over a large number of these rival tribes and founded the French monarchy. This so-called Merovingian dynasty persisted for two hundred and sixty-seven years. Then, the last of its enfeebled kings yielding to the increased authority of the Mayors of the Palace, Pepin founded the Carlovingian dynasty, which reached its zenith under his son Charlemagne. The latter's ambitions were imperial and resulted in an empire which extended east and west of the Rhine. It did not, however, long survive his death. Under the rule of his son and successor, Louis the Pious, the process of disintegration began. Rollo the Dane and his Northmen established the Dukedom of Normandy. Meanwhile, the stronger German element began to gravitate across the Rhine to the east, consolidating a German empire and leaving a residuum that in language, customs and government grew to be distinguishably French. Finally, in 987, Hugh Capet, Duke

## THE BACKGROUND

of Paris, established a supremacy over the other dukedoms into which France had become divided and founded the Capetian, or third French dynasty. This was some five hundred years later than the original invasion of the Germanic tribes.

Racially, therefore, as the French historian M. R. de Maulde la Clavière observes, "France is a singular country. We are slightly Greek, half Latin or Ligurian, very Gallic or very German, and in the West, the country of an intellectual gulf-stream, we are dreamers—Celts."

Hugh Capet, as Duke of the Royal Domain, which extended northward from Paris as far as Amiens and southward to Orleans, was a peer among his equals, who at the time numbered one hundred and fifty dukes, counts and barons. Their fiefs, which had become hereditary, were independent, yet mutually bound together by the complicated network of suzerainty and vassalage of the Feudal System. The most important included, along the shore of the Channel, Brittany, Normandy and Flanders, the last extending to the Rhine; on the East, Burgundy; on the West, Anjou, Poitou and Aquitaine; and in the South, Auvergne, Gascony, Toulouse and Provence. Geographically divided into two sections by the course of the Loire, the Southern part, superior at this time in civilization, was distinguished by their use of the *Langue d' Oc*, while the *Langue d' Oil* obtained in the North. The distinction was derived from corruptions of the Latin words, *hoc* and *hoc-illud*, which were respectively employed as

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terms of affirmation. The *Langue d' Oc*, while it admitted many varieties of dialect, remained closer to its Latin origin in vowel sounds, inflections and vocabulary and generally was softer, more harmonious and cunningly cadenced than the Northern French. The latter, on the other hand, excelled in vigor, variety and freshness (Saintsbury) : qualities that fitted it to grow with the development of the nation, until it has become the language of modern France.

The determining influences of the Capetian dynasty were the Crusades and the institution of Chivalry. Under the influence of a moral ideal and bound together by sentiments of honor and fraternity, the nobility were less disposed to internecine rivalry, and cultivated habits of courtesy and respect for women which ameliorated the conditions of society. The immense preparations demanded by the Crusades encouraged the trades and handicrafts, while the actual expeditions tended to bring the West into contact with the older civilization of the East and to hasten the revival of classic learning. Further, the huge loss of life drained the power of the nobility, until it ceased to be so formidable a menace alike to the authority of the Crown and to the growing freedom of the cities. Meanwhile, the bulk of the population was in abject serfdom, so that the country was able to offer little resistance to the encroachments of the English. The rivalry of Edward III with Philip VI, first king of the House of Valois, started the Hundred Years' War (1340-1453), which depleted what was left of French chivalry and brought protracted disaster to the whole community,

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until finally the tide of victory was turned by the mystic heroism of the Maid of Orleans.

The Feudal System, which the circumstances of war had disintegrated, received its quietus from Louis XI (1461-1483). By direct attack and the indirect assaults of diplomacy he wore down a condition of society which had served its time and was now only a hindrance to peace, order and sound government. As a counterpoise to the power of the barons he "created parliaments at Grenoble, Bordeaux and Dijon; multiplied appeals to the King's Court against sentences pronounced by the feudal tribunals, retained existing provincial assemblies and created new ones; sanctioned free election of magistrates, and granted to the *bourgeoisie* privileges which enabled them to hold their own against the barons." He also encouraged manufactures, industries and commerce. Upon his deathbed he confided his son and heir, Charles VIII, a boy of thirteen, to the care of his daughter Anne of Beaujeu. The latter was only twenty-three years of age, but, as her father used to say of her, "She is the least foolish woman in the world; for there is no such person as a wise one."

Of the events of Charles's reign it is sufficient to recall that he married Anne of Brittany, thus uniting the duchy of Brittany and that of Anjou to the French Crown, and accepted the invitation made to him by some of the enemies of Pope Alexander VI to invade Italy. The foreign entanglement was carried forward by his grand-nephew and successor Louis XII, who also married his uncle's widow, Anne of Brittany.

## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

While the king thus laid the trail that brought France into contact with Italian culture, and by economies at home and encouragement of peace and commerce prepared the country to benefit by the new impulses, his queen contributed to the growth of a gentler and more refined influence by establishing a court at which women for the first time appeared in society. Henceforth the feminine equation enters conspicuously into the actual government of France as well as into the story of her artistic development. With the exception of the period of masculine domination during the vigorous rule of Louis XIV, before he succumbed to the sway of Madame de Maintenon, feminine influence in the various forms of wife, queen-mother, mistress or leader of a salon, predominated until the end of the eighteenth century.

That it made its appearance at the close of the medieval period is natural enough, since the causes which made for the breaking up of the feudal system must have long contributed to the independence and efficiency of the women. During their husbands' absence from home in the wars and the minority of their fatherless sons, they would be compelled to undertake the management of the estate, and even the dispensing of justice. Under such circumstances thousands of women, unknown to fame, must have been entitled to Brantôme's description of Anne of Beaujeu as "the cleverest and ablest lady that ever was"; while many must have solaced their loneliness with study, as did Anne of Brittany, "who understood Latin and a little Greek." To extend the opportunity of intellectual

## THE BACKGROUND

culture to other women was partly, no doubt, her motive in assembling at court the younger ladies of noble families. Similarly, in the succeeding reign of Francis I, woman's influence was decisive. His mother, Louise of Savoy, had reared him as befitted a gallant knight rather than a monarch. He was trained in the code of chivalry and of heroic ideals by familiarity with the poetic romances of the *Chansons de Gestes*. His thirst for glory, in consequence, exceeded his capacity for war. He failed in his military adventures, but was the center of an elegant and gallant court. Meanwhile his sister, Margaret of Navarre or Angoulême, was intellectually his superior. During his captivity in Spain, following the defeat at Pavia, she handled the reins of government; and after her brother's restoration established a court of her own at Nerac, which rivaled the *esprit* and splendor of those at Fountainebleau and the Louvre. Here she reigned as queen over a little kingdom of arts and letters; encouraging native scholars and poets as well as offering hospitality to Italians; nurturing a spirit of catholic tolerance by extending honor alike to Calvin and Boccaccio, and contributing with her own pen to poetry and prose and even to morality plays and farces. Her poems, collected under the title, *Les Marguerites de la Marguerite la Princesse*, rank her among the poets of the time, second only to Clement Marot, whom she befriended when he was being pursued by the Church for the freedom of his expressions; while she not only caused the *Decameron* to be translated into French, but herself composed a heptameron, which comprised fifteen

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novelettes on the model of Boccaccio's. She was, indeed, a very vital influence in stimulating and directing the beginnings of the French Renaissance.

It must be remembered, however, that while contact with Italian culture brought about a renaissance in France, the latter country was no stranger to learning or to arts and letters. The eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries—the period also distinguished by the extent and perfection of cathedral and church building—had produced the epic poems, *Chansons de Gestes*. The most famous is the *Chanson de Roland*, based on the exploits of Charlemagne, though dignifying Roland even more than the emperor. Again, toward the end of the twelfth century appeared the French version of the Arthurian legend, originally written in nervous, picturesque prose, but later versified by Chrestien de Troyes, some of whose poems, as Saintsbury says, "are deeply imbued with religious mysticism, passionate gallantry and refined courtesy of manners." So far, however, a spirit distinguishably French is not represented. The *Chansons de Gestes* are Teutonic, probably in origin and certainly in genius; the Arthurian legends are tinged with the Celtic and Byzantine, while the Provençal poetry is rather akin to the temperament and character of Spanish and Italian literature. Moreover, all these forms have a quality of artificiality and are the expressions of courtly and knightly society and not of the nation at large. The latter was for the first time represented in the *Fabliaux* which were produced from the latter

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half of the twelfth to the latter part of the fourteenth centuries. They have been defined as “a recital, for the most part comic, of an adventure real or possible, which occurs in the ordinary conditions of human life.” In fact the *esprit gaulois* makes its first appearance in the mocking raillery of these ludicrous presentations of life and humanity. The chief target for their scoffing is the weakness of the female sex and the frailty of the clergy; though all classes, knights, burghers, peasants, come in for their share of ridicule. Their popularity passed over into Italy and England, where Boccaccio and Chaucer imitated them. From Italy they return to France in a Renaissance guise; while the most famous of these, the *Roman du Renart*, wherein the characters are animals and birds, received a brilliant transformation in the *Contes* of La Fontaine, and quite recently in the *Chantecler* of M. Rostand.

Akin to the mocking tone of the *Fabliaux* are the satirical lyrics of Adam de la Halle and Ruteboeuf. On the other hand verse was the medium for serious historical themes, as in the *Roman de Rou* (Rollo) by Wace, and for a moral story in allegorical guise, as in the very famous *Roman de la Rose*. This poem of twenty thousand lines relates the poet’s dream. He walks abroad on a fair May morning until he reaches a garden. Upon the walls are painted the figures of Hatred, Covetousness, Avarice, Envy, Sadness, Old Age and Poverty. Dame Leisure admits him through a barred wicket and introduces him to Courtesy, who invites him to join the company of singers and dancers

## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

in the train of Delight. Wandering toward the Fountain of Narcissus he espies a Rosebud and covets it. But thorns and thistles bar his approach and the God of Love pierces him with an arrow. Finally after many rebuffs he is permitted by Venus to kiss the Rosebud; whereupon Shame and Jealousy conspire against him and he is driven from the Garden. So far the poem was written by one William de Loiris. It was continued by Jean de Meung, who introduced a coarser vein of satirical observation, descanting upon the ways of women and the subject of morality, and citing innumerable examples from sacred and secular writings.

The taste for allegory and didactic moralizing engendered by the popularity of this poem, found speedy expression in the Morality plays; for the step from narrative form to one in which the characters speak in *propria persona* was easy and natural. Far earlier than these, however, had been the Mystery and Miracle plays; the former dealing with the Life and Passion of the Saviour and with events and personages of the Old Testament, the latter with the lives of the Virgin and Saints. Originally presented in the church or cathedral by the clergy, they outgrew the limitations of the sacred edifice and passed into the hands of the laity; becoming occasions of local importance, presided over by the several guilds of trades. Finally regular societies of actors were formed for their representation, among which the earliest and most famous was the *Confraternity of the Passion*, licensed in Paris in 1402.

Meanwhile, even before the arrival of the Moralities a secular drama made its appearance. To Adam de

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la Halle is credited the earliest known comedy in the vulgar tongue, and the earliest specimen of comic opera. In *Li Jus de la Feuille*, the author relates his own troubles with his wife and satirizes other citizens of his native town, Arras, while the plot of *Robin and Manon* represents a dramatized form of the popular romantic love poems, known as *Pastourelles*. Also related to the *Fabliaux* are the Farces which become so characteristic a feature of the French drama. The most famous is that of *Pathelin*, which survived the Renaissance, was included in 1706 in the repertoire of the Théâtre Français and was acted in Paris so recently as 1872. For the performance of farces the clerks of the law courts had organized themselves into a company, licensed by the Crown, known as *La Bazoche du Palais*; while various Fool-Companies, among which *Les Enfants Sans Souci* were conspicuous, devoted themselves to that peculiar form of farce known as the Sottie. It dealt in political satire and was performed by typical Fool characters, such as *Prince des Sots* (the leader of the company), *Mère Sotte* and the like. The most famous *Mère Sotte*, both as author and actor was Pierre Gringoire, who also composed a mystery and a morality for the trades guilds to perform and was Master of the Revels on the occasion of official pageants. Flourishing under Louis XII, his popularity continued into the reign of Francis I, notwithstanding the latter's dislike of the freedom of the Sottie, and only succumbed to the change of taste brought about by the arrival at the French Court of the Italian Comedians.

## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

The fact which stands out preëminently in the foregoing brief summary of the literary life of France prior to the sixteenth century is its native vigor and racial originality. The national genius, though as yet undeveloped and furnished with a vehicle of language still rude in form and lacking in quantity and subtlety of vocabulary, set its imprint upon everything it handled. In the Epic of Arthur, the satire of Renard and the allegorical romance of the Rose it produced the three most popular works of the Middle Ages. Moreover, "it is now established beyond the possibility of doubt that to France almost every great literary style, as distinguished from great individual works, is at this period due." France, in fact, had demonstrated literary greatness of a high order and undeniably racial character during three centuries before her contact with Italian culture initiated her own Renaissance. The same is true of her painting.

## CHAPTER II

### PRE-RENAISSANCE ART

THE beginnings of painting in France, as in all the Northern countries, are involved in obscurity. But land is no less real, because it has been uncharted. One detects its vague outlines against the obscurity of the past, while nearer in point of time are conspicuous elevations, arresting and engrossing, notwithstanding that they are nameless. They are not connected with the remoter past as in Italy by a continuous if slender tradition, shading back through early Christianity to Roman days. They emerge slowly out of the background of Northern barbarism. Italy's first, and for a time, sole influence upon the North was that she handed on to it the Christian Faith. From this sprang the germs of civilization which the French shaped and developed according to their own temperament and needs.

Christianity had lingered on among the remains of Gallo-Roman civilization, but had become swamped by the German occupation. The Visigoths and Burgundians were the first to embrace the Faith. The decisive point was reached, however, when Clovis, engaged in consolidating a Frankish monarchy, yielded to the love and adroitness of his Burgundian Queen, Clotilda, and was baptized at Rheims in 496. This involved at

## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

least the nominal acceptance of the Faith by the whole mass of the Franks, and henceforth France is to be regarded as a Christian country. It is noteworthy that at this period the Church had as yet no magnificence in her places of worship. Such as they were they followed the tradition of the basilica or hall of justice; a rectangular interior, with an apse projecting at the eastern end. So far as the ecclesiastical ritual was sumptuously furnished, it was rather in the way of vestments and sacred vessels and adornments, objects, in fact, of artistic craftsmanship. In the latter, as applied to secular purposes, the German tribes had already possessed some skill, which was developed and led into higher planes of imaginative invention by their growth in Christian zeal.

A further development of taste and skill was reached when the imperial rule of Charlemagne brought the West in contact with the East. He regarded himself and was regarded by his contemporaries as the successor of the Eastern emperors and it was to Byzantium and the East that he turned for the glorification of his power. When he established his palace at Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) he obtained permission from Pope Adrian to remove thither the decorations of Theodoric's palace at Ravenna. Its pillars, mosaic pavements and panels of marble, were incorporated into the new Basilica at Aachen, which itself was modeled upon the Church of San Vitale in Ravenna. Moreover the emperor had entered into friendly relations with and received presents from the Saracen Caliph, Haroun-al-Raschid, whose power was steadily encroaching upon Byzantium.

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Thus it was by the older Byzantine art and by the immediate influence of the East and not by the example of Roman Italy that the German artistic imagination was in the first instance fertilized. The result was a gradual Northern growth in which a strain of Byzantine influence is perceptible, while on the other hand it takes independent forms, reflecting the racial distinctions of German proper, Burgundian, Flemish and Frank. All, however, have a common trait of naturalistic vigor, characteristically Northern, and in time share the Northern delight in craftsmanship.

So far as painting is concerned the development proceeds from illumination to frescoed adornments of the walls of churches and thence to the separate panel picture and finally to the painting upon canvas. Throughout, the decorative instinct prevails, as well as the realization of appearances and the expression of sentiment, the human figure being used in combination with beautiful accessories of textiles, architectural glass and metal work, mosaic and furniture, until the picture becomes an epitome of all the art-crafts of the period. Nor, while it is distinguished by elaborateness of detail, is it lacking in vigor and breadth of ensemble.

This fact is due to the conditions under which the early art of the North was produced. These were not individualistic, but socialistic, in the sense that there was co-operation and combination among all the workers in the various united arts. This great efflorescence of energy began after A. D. 1000, when Italy was still asleep. It had been popularly expected that the completion of the thousand years of Christianity would bring about the

## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

end of the world and usher in the terrors of the Judgment. When men found that the order of the cosmos was still pursuing its routine, the immense relief found its expression in a renewed joy of life and a more ardent piety. Thus commenced the great era of cathedral and church building which extended through the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries, during which the Northern genius was liberated and worked in the enthusiasm of its native imagination. And, to repeat, it was a collective effort of all skilled artists, under the impulse of a great Faith and of a great belief in life. An architecture was evolved that in its aspiration toward the infinite and in its adventurous logic of construction, has never been rivaled, much less surpassed; until even Italy was kindled by its example and condescended to learn of the Northern barbarian.

In the vast cathedrals of France and Germany, the imagination not only soared heavenward but spread itself in endless vistas, which lose themselves in the mystery of distance and intricacy, for they enshrine the mysticism as well as the vigor and aspiration of the race. Throughout is a luxuriance of decorative detail, intrinsically the opposite of the formal logic of Roman and Greek art, being indeed akin to the freer logic of nature's growth, as she clothes the structure of the tree with an outburst from within of leafage, fruit and flower. Nor is the ornament so purely esthetic as the Greek and Roman. It is also intellectual and, in a sense, if you will, literary. It embraces forms of ugliness as well as beauty; embodies in animal and human shape, now natural, now grotesque, the racial lust of

## PRE-RENAISSANCE ART

life and the inherited myths of the conflict between physical powers of good and evil, of darkness and light. It is a hieratic script, of human significance and meaning, outcropping from the edifice and, like the latter, an embodiment of abstract energy and exaltation in terms of human experience and feeling.

To-day these cathedrals, by comparison with their origin, are impressive sepulchers of memory. A thousand other outside interests compete with them; they are frequented by alien sightseers, or at best by worshipers whose faith, because it is no longer shared in common by all the world about them, can reverence these monuments of high physical and spiritual exaltation but is powerless to rival them. So it is only by a difficult straining of the imagination that one can picture the ancient days when the cathedral was inevitably the shrine of a whole community's yearning after the higher life, both in its relation to this world and the next; when the faith of a whole people served as a mighty impulse to the wealth of the powerful and the inventive genius of the artists; when the efforts of the latter diffused taste and appreciation throughout the whole community, until it reverenced and enjoyed, as a possession of its own, this miracle of the divine working in the human.

Picture, if it be possible, this shrine of popular devotion and pride, not completed, for successive ages will add to its embellishment; but already as perfect as the genius of the past has been able to make it; an edifice, rooted in strength and springing upward with agile grace and freedom; blossoming with sculptured ornament; its walls opening to the outside light in innumer-

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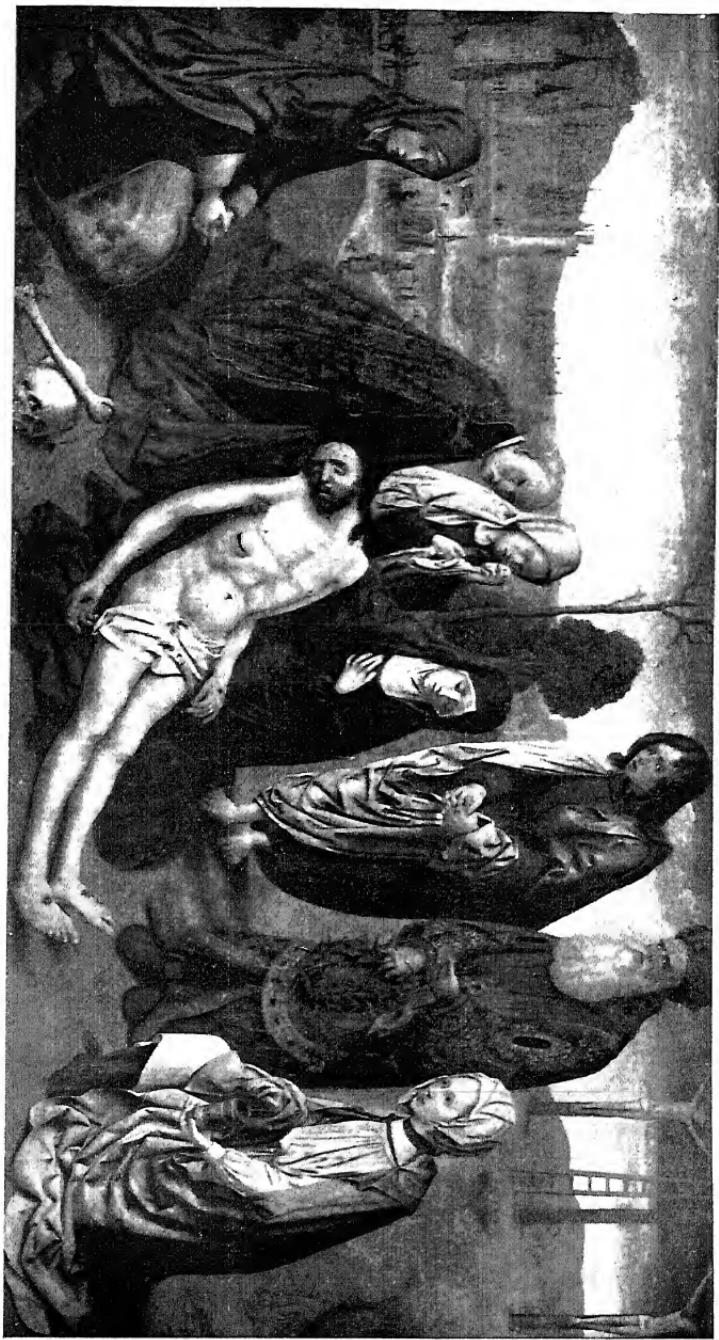
able traceried windows that glow with the splendor of colored glass; its pavements laid with marbles; its furniture of marvelously carved woodwork and wrought metal; precious metals and jewels flashing in the sacred vessels, and glory of textiles and embroideries making sumptuous the furnishings of the altar and of those who serve before it. As the solemn ritual proceeds in the presence of the kneeling multitude and the fragrance of the incense bears aloft the breath of united faith and adoration, the music of the organ and the voices, another of the great distinguishing features of the Northern cathedral, rolls forth a flood that fills the vast spaces and merges the thousandfold forms of beauty and the collective emotions of the worshipers in a wondrous ensemble of spiritual harmony.

The human appeal of these cathedrals was increased during the middle of the thirteenth century by the profuse use of statues. Sculpture had attained to a greater suppleness and freedom of action. The human forms as well as the draperies appear to have been studied from models. Moreover, canons of form seem to have been established, based on geometric principles and so elaborated as to cover every usual attitude and gesture of the human body. By following these formulas, laid down by the master designers, the ordinary workers were able to secure a high degree of grace and poise of figure. The draperies are particularly masterly, vying with those of the Greeks. Indeed a curious strain of affinity with the Greek feeling is apparent in this early sculpture and will appear in later forms of both sculpture and painting. Can it be a product of the

THE DEPOSITION

LOUVRE

UNKNOWN MASTER OF XV CENTURY





## PRE-RENAISSANCE ART

transfusion of the Byzantine influence with the fresh-eyed interest in nature of the Germanic race, influenced in turn by the tender refinement of the Celtic strain and the vivacity of the Gallo-Roman? Whatever the source of this trait, it is a phenomenon of great account in French art, a phase of the *esprit gaulois*, which was anterior to the influence of the Italian Renaissance, and was to modify and survive it.

. . . . .

The practice of painting, in France, would appear to have developed under similar conditions of a few master-artists establishing canons of form and composition to be followed by their numerous assistants; an atelier system such as characterized also the flourishing periods of Japanese art. The earliest French painters were the miniaturists and illuminators, examples of whose work can be studied in the Bibliothèque Nationale. They were produced for the service of the ritual and as treasures for royalty and the nobility. The panel picture, on the other hand, was intended for popular edification, even as the early mystery and miracle plays to which they are closely akin both in motive and style. Their appeal is couched in the vernacular, reaching the intelligence and emotion of the people by directly natural means. As to the quality of their naturalism M. Viollet-le-Duc contends that "in the drawing of the form, in correct observation of movements, in composition and in expression the French artists both in sculpture and painting cast off the trammels of conventionalism long before the Italians did. The paintings and vignettes which the thirteenth cen-

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tury has bequeathed to us are a proof of the fact; and fifty years previous to Giotto we had among us painters who had already realized the progress ascribed to the pupil of Cimabue. From the twelfth century to the fifteenth drawing becomes modified. Fettered at first by the traditions of Byzantine art, it begins by shaking off those rules of a particular school. Without abandoning style it looks for principles derived from the observation of nature. The study of gesture soon attains to a rare delicacy and then comes a search after expression. As early as the second half of the thirteenth century we recognize striking efforts of composition; the dramatic idea finds place and some of the scenes exhibit powerful energy."

It is to be noted that Viollet-le-Duc, whose writings on architecture, archeology and criticism appeared between the years 1850 and 1875, was a confessed opponent of the theory that French art owed its greatest obligation to the Italian and Roman tradition. His followers went so far as to sweep the latter entirely out of consideration. He, however, was saner in his views; recognizing the debt to the Renaissance and thence to the Romans, but maintaining that what was intrinsically valuable in the art of his country, in every period, was traceable to enduring traits inherent in the racial amalgam of the French people, and that, even when they borrowed, the French artists fixed on the result the impress of the French character.

The Louvre in two of its galleries, and in examples, scattered elsewhere, presents fairly sufficient evidence

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of the painting of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and also of the period during which the Italian artists were working at Fountainebleau.

Among the paintings of the fourteenth century is (995) *The Last Communion and Martyrdom of St. Denis*; the patron Saint of Old Paris, the first preacher of Christianity in that city, who suffered for the Faith in the year 270. Legend relates that after his decapitation on the Hill of Montmartre, he walked, bearing his head in his hand, to a spot two miles away where a pious lady buried him. Later the body was removed to the Abbey of St. Denis, which became the last resting-place of the kings of France. The composition involves a series of incidents, represented against a gold background. In the center Christ hangs upon the Cross, while the Holy Father stretches out his hands above Him. At the left, Christ, attended by a kneeling angel, administers the Wafer and Chalice to the saint, whose head shows through the bars of a window at the foot of a red brick tower. On the right, the saint, in a blue cope embroidered with gold, kneels at the block, while the executioner raises his ax. The body and head of another ecclesiastic lie at the foot of the cross, while a third awaits his turn of death. In the middle distance stands a group of spectators. The neck of the Saint is already half severed and blood flows profusely from the breast and the feet of Christ. While these details are sufficiently horrible, the limbs of the executioner are lithe and graceful, and the carnations of the flesh-tints throughout very tenderly painted. In fact, the picture

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shows the evidence of being an enlarged miniature. It is attributed to Jean Malouel and Henri Bellechose.

Also projected on a gold background are (996) *Christ Dead* and (997) *The Entombment*. The former shows the nude body of the Christ, crowned with thorns and bleeding, upheld in the arms of The Father. He is robed in blue, as also is the Virgin while St. John, who stands beside her, wears a red mantle. At the left are five child-angels. The panel is circular and again suggests an enlarged miniature. The scale is unfortunate in view of the shape, for the composition appears unduly contracted, the result being a lack of bigness in the general effect. On the other hand, in *The Entombment* there is a marked increase of power in the treatment of the spaces and planes. The foreground is occupied by three old men, bearing the sacred body, while in the middle distance appears the Virgin, accompanied by Mary Magdalene and Mary Salome, behind whom stands St. John. At the left the scene is being witnessed by an abbot.

That the use of the plain gold background—a survival of the miniature, derived from Byzantine tradition—continued into the early part of the fifteenth century may be learned from a rendering of the popular theme of St. George. It is a multiple picture, containing various incidents. Here, the saint is in the act of slaying the dragon; there, is being dragged to execution at the heels of a mule; elsewhere lies the dead body, its severed head being crowned with glory, while soldiers, whose lances form a hedge as in Velasquez' *Surrender of Breda*, and the executioners prostrate themselves or

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lift up their hands in awe at the apparition of the saint, kneeling in the sky.

In a fourth example, (941) *The Scourging of Christ*, the flat gold background yields to an architectural setting. It represents Gothic arcades in the pointed style, under which St. Peter and St. Paul stand, at the left and right of a central canopy. Here, bound to a pillar, is the Christ, His body splashed with blood from the wounds inflicted by birches and thongs, wielded by two executioners. The action and expression are more vigorous than in the preceding examples and the modeling of the figures more angular. The painting has more affinity with the sculpture of the period than with miniatures.

There is an interesting analogy between the multiple pictures and the stage settings and performances of the mystery and miracle plays of the period. It was customary to surround the back of the stage with enclosures variously styled *estals*, *mansions*, *lieux*. These represented the different localities, or as we should say, scenes, involved in the action of the drama, and were occupied by the groups of actors connected with each incident. There exists a title page of a lost "Mystery of St. Apollonia." The artist, no other than the famous Jehan Foucquet, has represented on the stage the torturing of the saint under circumstances of gross violence, corresponding to the horror of detail that characterizes the pictures of the period. Meanwhile, raised in the rear is a series of canopied stalls; the right hand one occupied by the Prince of Evil, standing above the open dragon's mouth of Hell; the left representing Heaven, where

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the Virgin sits surrounded by Saints. In another box is a vacant chair from which the Emperor Decius has descended to superintend the torture. He will probably make his exit through the dragon's mouth, while the holy maid will be escorted up the flight of steps that leads to the mansion of the Virgin. Thus the locality became for the time being the seat of the incident. The practice grew until the mansions were differentiated by architectural fixtures and other details, suggestive of the particular locality. So by degrees came into use that peculiar feature of the early French Renaissance stage, known as *le Décor Simultané*, which presented a grouped arrangement of all the places to which the author's fancy transported the action of the play. Thus it would appear that in this particular the drama and painting influenced each other reciprocally.

The pictures, so far considered, while they represent the incident dramatically, with fairly natural action and often striking expression, are in composition confused and agitated. They lack the dignity and force of static quality. It is in this respect that the work of the end of the fifteenth century shows a great advance. Compare, for example, (998) *The Deposition* (p. 20). How well ordered is the composition! Its geometric basis is a little obvious, but the rigidity and formality are assuaged by the suppleness and naturalness of the forms. So evident a love of truth has inspired the artist's observation. Nor less interesting in its naïve sincerity, is the way in which the truth is brought home to the actual life of the Parisians of the day. The Cross

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is set up outside their own city. In the distance extends a view, lovely in its detail, of the Abbey of St. Germain-des-Prés (then truly of the meadows) with the Seine beyond, washing the base of the Louvre of Philippe Augustus, over the towers of which shows the summit of Montmartre. These open spaces and that of the sky happily balance the foreground group, the ordering of which is accompanied by studied moderation in the gestures and expression of the figures. There are no ghastly evidences of blood; the tibia and skull simply remind us that the place is Golgotha; all the pathos of the scene is conveyed by the pitifully helpless body of Christ and the silent anguish that characterizes each individual of the group. We may be conscious of a certain formal affectation in the weeping woman who kneels between the Virgin and the abbot Guillaume, prior of St. Germain; but the respective expressions of these two are admirable; so, too, are the agony and adoration of the young St. John, the grave solicitude of the venerable Joseph of Arimathea; the Magdalen's humble desolation, and the woeful amazement of the seated woman at the left. She is robed in slaty blue, the Virgin in blue of a brighter tone, the woman beside the latter being in black with a green veil, while the abbot's cope is of rose-colored brocade. St. John's cloak is old rose over a crimson tunic. Joseph's Oriental costume consists of a brown turban and richly embroidered garberdine above a green robe, while the Magdalen wears a white head-cloth and robe, the latter partly covered with a pale rose mantle. The colors, exceedingly beautiful, are illumined with a pure, out-of-doors light.

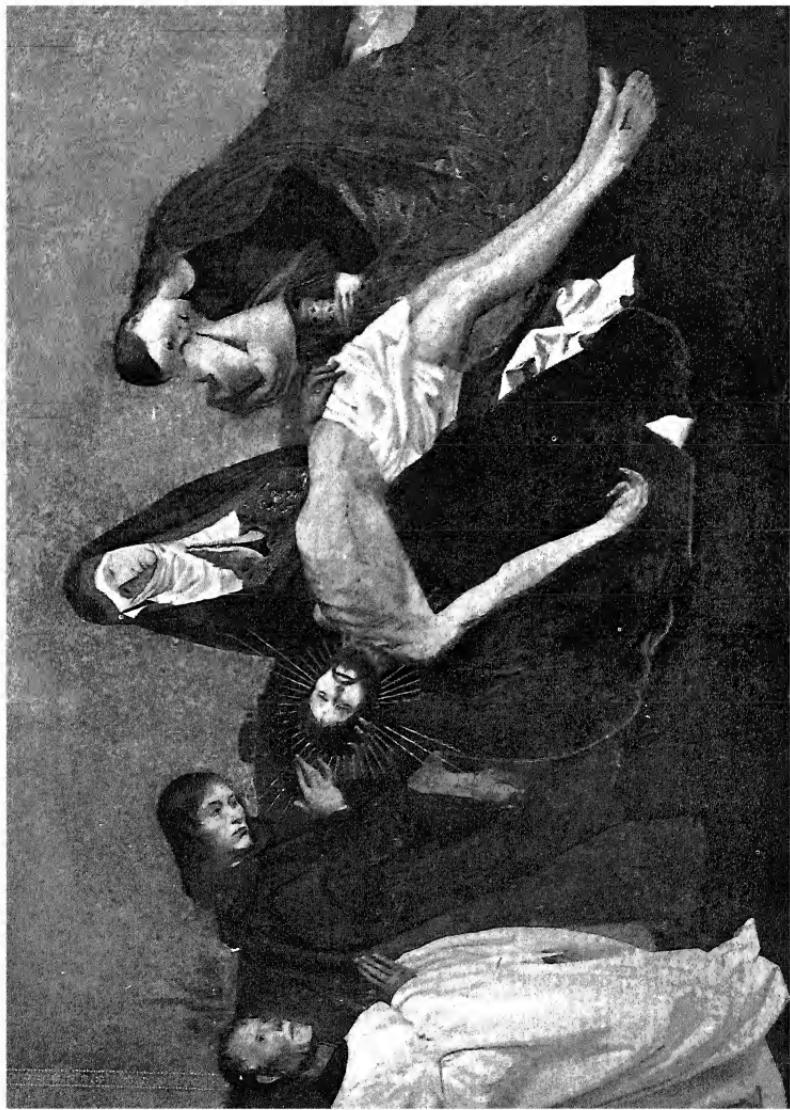
## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

The gem, however, of these primitive religious pictures in the Louvre is 1001 <sup>bis</sup> a *Pietá* of the School of Avignon (p. 29). It will be recalled that through the intrigues of Philip the Fair this Provençal city became in 1309 the domicile of the Popes; this "second Babylonish Captivity," as it has been called, lasting until 1376. The palace remained in papal possession until 1791, when it was annexed by France. Until quite recent years the castellated building was used as a barracks and coats of whitewash covered the mural decorations which have been lately revealed. Some of them, which are religious in subject, are attributed to Italian followers of Giotto, notably to Simone Memmi. But the latest restoration reveals another interior, decorated with secular subjects of hunting and fishing. In these a few figures are sprinkled against a background of grassy lawns and dense foliage, which is executed with delicate precision, forming an exquisite arabesque of leafage. All these paintings must have cultivated the taste and stimulated the rivalry of local artists; but are not in themselves sufficient to explain the grand simplicity and severe exaltation which dignify this *Pietá*. Its inspiration is rather to be found in the higher intellectuality which characterized the cities of Provence. To this day they abound in magnificent monuments of the Roman occupation, which in the fifteenth century were no doubt in better preservation. It is not difficult to realize the effect which the vast sweep of amphitheaters and the silhouette of gateways, walls and aqueducts must have wrought on the imagination of



SCHOOL OF AVIGNON

PIETÀ



## PRE-RENAISSANCE ART

the local artists; teaching them to see things more architectonically, simply and grandly.

Comparing this picture with *The Deposition*, one notes the greater abstraction of the former. The background is gold, surrounded by a text and border, fashioned in diaper; nor is there so natural an individualization of the figures, if we except the wonderfully direct characterization of the priest. But for what the *Pietá* loses in naturalness and detailed observation it more than atones in the intensity of its abstract appeal; moreover, in the majestic simplicity of its coördination, so calculated as to give the exactly appropriate degree of emphasis to each of the parts. The eye is spellbound by the gesture of the Saviour's body; at first, it may be, painfully. But soon the grace and dignity of its arc of direction, so tenderly white against the black, gold-bordered mantle of the Virgin, wins one's sympathy. The obtrusion of the form yields to a pathetic insistence; its curve has the supple limpness of a wilting flower-stem, until it reaches the strain of the flesh over the ribs and the emphatic angle of the arm, which concentrate attention on the face with its eyes closed and lips apart in an expression of noble suffering. Toward it is inclined the head of the Virgin, thereby concentrating the prominence given to her raised and isolated position. The face is not that of a Mother; it is *the* Mother's, in its pure and noble abstraction. Scarcely less noble in its abstract, reverential tenderness is the expression of St. John, as he removes the crown of thorns from the illumined head. His robe is also

## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

black, bordered with gold and partly concealed by a brown cloak, while the Magdalen, as she holds a yellow handkerchief to her eyes, is draped in old dull crimson. And not less admirable than the monumental reserve of the color-scheme are the amplitude of the masses of the drapery and the large simplicity with which the planes are treated. There is nothing finer in Zurbarán's rendering of the white habits of the Carthusian monks than the effective handling here of the priest's surplice.

This *Pietá* fitly summarizes in pictorial form the noblest aspect of the medieval civilization that was even then in process of being superseded by the modern. So far as technique is concerned its unknown painter had attained in his art the mastery of architectonics that the sculptors and more particularly the architects had achieved in theirs. Emotional fervor is here tempered to a logical restraint and intellectualized. Intensity of conviction and of personal sensation are elevated to impersonal, abstract expression; nature has been noted and rendered, but sublimated with a universal suggestion. Consequently, this primitive work, purged from the formalism of the Byzantine and the affectation and undue naturalism of the Gothic and not yet tainted with the sophistical superior knowledge and mundane quality of the Italian invasion, appeals to the higher consciousness and purest imagination of the modern mind. For the latter, wearied with much learning and with a prolonged pursuit of naturalistic verisimilitudes, is seeking to recover more abstract principles and an attitude of approach to nature which views it in relation to the universal.

## PRE-RENAISSANCE ART

Somewhat corresponding to the development of religious painting before the French Renaissance is that of portraiture. It is distinguished by a resolute regard for nature. The painters represented the kings and nobles in whose employ they served without any attempt to idealize, registering conscientiously the impressions of the eye and paying careful attention to details of the costume. Accordingly, even the most indifferent ones have a documentary value, and one can study to-day with an assurance of their veritableness the countenances, often forbidding, of some of the chief characters in the tangled drama of the times. These portraits, in fact, are more illuminative of history than much reading of books.

The earliest portraits in the Louvre belong to the fifteenth century. Note, for example, a pair representing, respectively, Pierre II, Duke of Bourbon, Sire of Beaujeu and his wife Anne, daughter of Louis XI. In each case the figure is kneeling, three quarters profile; the husband in front of St. Peter who carries the keys; the lady facing St. John, who bears his emblem, a pyx from which a dragon springs. The figures are disposed in a corridor, through an opening of which appears a landscape. These portraits are assigned to the Burgundian school and exhibit a Flemish feeling in the treatment of the charming landscapes and the rich fabrics of the costumes, though inferior in the flesh parts, which are flabby and rather expressionless. Also belonging to the Burgundian school is a portrait of Philippe Le Bon, Duke of Burgundy, wearing the Order of the Golden Fleece which he had instituted in

## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

1430. Formerly attributed to one of the Bellini, but now recognized as the work of some French painter of the early fifteenth century is a group-portrait of *Jean Juvenal des Ursins*, president of the Parliament, and his wife and eleven children. In this picture, too, the figures are kneeling, the father in advance and the wife and children strung out behind him, while underneath each is an inscription giving the name and title. The background represents a chapel divided into three parts, across the front of which is stretched to half the height, a cloth of gold dossal drapery. Except in a documentary sense, as a record of costumes and inscriptions and as an example of workshop methods, following the canons but uninspired by the artist, this picture has no interest. One cannot even accept it as evidence of portraiture, for the same physiognomy is repeated in all the heads.

On the contrary it is a human document that confronts us in the diptych portrait of René d'Anjou and his second wife, Jeanne de Laval. René, Duke of Anjou, Count of Provence and titular King ("le bon roi René") of Naples, until dispossessed by Alfonso of Aragon in 1442, was himself a painter as well as a patron of art and literature. The heads and busts are shown in profile; the king's having an expression of noble resignation, while his Queen's is a trifle sentimental in its sad sweetness. The execution is studiously elaborated and delicately truthful in detail. These portraits are attributed to Nicolas Froment of Avignon, who was also a painter of still-life and landscape.

The finest example, however, of the portraiture of the

## PRE-RENAISSANCE ART

period is shown in the almost profile bust, *Portrait of a Woman*, painted by an unknown artist at the end of the fifteenth century. The subject is a lady of circumstance. She wears a red damask robe, fur-trimmed and cut square at the neck, revealing a blue silk guimpe. Over the latter lies a dainty, jeweled necklace, while suspended by a chain over her bosom is a handsome jewel, in the center of which appears the figure of St. John the Baptist. The hair is drawn back off the high forehead and confined in a quilled cap, over which shows the edge of a red skull cap, beneath a black hood, edged with pearls. The head is placed against a background sown with pansies and forget-me-nots, which add meaning to the inscription upon a scroll held between the lady's thumb and forefinger: "*De quoilque non vede yo my recorde,*" "I remember those whom I do not see." Any suspicion of sentimentalism is banished by the expression of the face, which has a large strong nose and firmly set mouth. It is a face full of character, calm and purposeful, yet tender and constant; that of a châtelaine who could ably administer her husband's affairs in his absence.

The dominant figure of this transition period is Jean Foucquet who was born in Tours about 1415 and died about 1485. He was painter in ordinary both to Charles VII and Louis XI. Some part of his life was spent in Italy, where he seems to have been chiefly affected by the work of the primitive Tuscans. Yet not in imitation but in emulation; their example stimulating his own habit of conscientious observation and directly simple

## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

rendering. He made his mark alike in panel pictures and in miniatures. Forty of the latter, illustrating a Book of Hours for Étienne Chevalier are preserved at Chantilly. He is represented in the Louvre by two portraits respectively of Charles VII and of the *Juvenal des Ursins* whose portrait with his family by an unknown painter has been already noticed. Here, however, Juvenal is shown as a man of forceful character, such as is to be expected of one who was Chancellor of France under both Charles and Louis. Half life-size, he is represented standing in profile, in an oratory, clasping his hands before a *priedieu*, where a book lies open upon a cushion. His costume consists of a dull red robe, trimmed with fur, fashioned with large, stuffed sleeves, and confined at the waist with a belt from which a purse depends. Green panels are fitted into the gilt pilasters of the background, the capitals of which comprise the coat of arms of the Ursin family, supported by two muzzled bears rampant. The portrait, as Gustave Geffroy remarks, affirms the subject's character, as at once a bourgeois, a jurist and a man of the sword.

Compared with the ampleness of the Chancellor, the *Portrait of Charles VII* (p. 34) presents a sad-featured, meager face that ill accords with the inscription at the top and bottom of the panel: "*Le tres glorieux roy de France, Charles Septiesme de ce nom.*" Impressed, however, on the face are the traces both of his character and of his experience. When his father, Charles VI, died he was a young man of nineteen, confronted with a divided country over the greater part of which the English held control. He is described



PORTRAIT OF CHARLES VII

LOUVRE

JEAN FOUCQUET



## PRE-RENAISSANCE ART

as being of a delicate constitution, a good scholar, timid, reserved, but addicted to indulgence. It was not until some years later, after the triumphs of Joan of Arc, that he was crowned at Rheims. When his authority was finally established he set himself to reorganize the finances of the country, at the same time reducing the power of the feudal aristocracy by employing as ministers and captains of war members of the bourgeois and lesser nobility. His end was miserable. Louis, his son, having openly rebelled, Charles, in terror of being poisoned, refused food and ended his exhausted life by starvation. The good and the bad, the promise and the failure of the royal personality are marvelously suggested in this great human document, surely one of the most arresting portraits in the world.

Another superb example is that of *Etienne Chevalier with St. Stephen* in the Berlin Museum. The Secretary of Charles VII stands with hands folded as in prayer beside the Saint, who holds a book with a stone upon it in his left hand, while his right rests on the shoulder of his namesake. The youthful face of the proto-martyr, calm and strong, is one of singular purity, while in that of the older man is embedded the suggestion of resolute directness, probity and kindly devotion. The figures are shown about half length in a corridor of Renaissance architecture, and again the artist betrays his favorite palette of red, green and gold-embroidered blue.

It appears in the strangely alluring *Virgin and Child* of the Antwerp Museum. Red and blue nude child-angels form a clustering background to the tasseled,

## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

jeweled throne on which Madonna sits. An ermine cloak depends from her shoulders and is held across her lap with one hand for the nude Babe to sit on. The tight fitting bodice of her green robe is unlaced, releasing the left breast. It is a sphere of ivory, wax-white like the neck and the globe of the head. For the eyelids are lowered and the hair brushed off the high forehead, so that the head beneath the large jeweled crown seems as if bald. Immobile as marble and as cold are the form and its expression; yet instinct with latent coquetry, that exhales its allurement as naturally and as purely as a flower its fragrance. And with a similar detachment from passion one yields to the seduction. For the suggestion and the charm are those of femininity in the abstract. Agnes Sorel, the king's mistress, is known to have been the model; but the representation is cleansed of personality.

Foucquet's masterpiece, indeed, offers a strangely interesting commentary on the mental attitude of its time toward religion and the sex-relations. Moreover, it is the first indication in painting of the idea of "the eternal feminine," as interpreted by the finest qualities of the *esprit gaulois*. For the latter's choicest expression of the eternal feminine involves nothing of coarseness or seductiveness but represents, as embodied in the idea of woman, the essence of the allure and beauty of life. It has in it not a little of Attic naïveté and simplicity. It is a clue and the chief one, to some of the most characteristic phases of French art.

## CHAPTER III

### THE EARLY RENAISSANCE

**I**T was the good fortune of France to receive the wine of Italian culture when she was ready to assimilate its heady strength; when, in fact, she was already a strong and growing nation with a vigorous culture all her own. Other nations were less lucky, at least as far as painting is concerned. England at this period was growing lustily, but her background of culture was only meager. Consequently, when the Renaissance reached her, mainly filtered through the French, it found a Shakespeare to fertilize but no painting. Nearly two hundred years had to elapse before there were English painters ready for the Italian influence, by which time the adoption of the latter was largely an affectation. The same is true of Germany, after a still longer period of waiting. The great tradition of Dürer and Holbein was checked by the Reformation; and, when the Renaissance reached her, it found no native culture to ferment. In lieu of it was a tradition of independence and profound religious feeling and these it fertilized. Germany enriched the world with ideas of civil and religious liberty, but at the expense of art. Only little Holland effected for a time the union of the three. As for Italy—sooner or later she fructified the world; but her own harvest of culture

## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

was raised upon a soil, already impoverished and continually growing poorer. The dawn of the fifteenth century broke upon the beginning of her highest splendor; the close of the century saw it set. Twilight passed into a night, that until the nineteenth century remained unbroken. Meanwhile France, even before the collapse of Italian culture, began to be the arbiter and dispenser of art to the modern world and has maintained the rôle to the present day.

To what must the phenomenon be attributed? Firstly, to the fact already mentioned that at the time of her contact with Italian culture France already had a glorious past in architecture and sculpture and was growing in nationality, with a living literature and art of painting that were racy of the French character. To her the Renaissance did not come as a new birth, but as a reinforcement and refinement of a vigorous life. Secondly, she demonstrated again and not for the last time, her racial capacity of assimilation. Even as she had borrowed from Celtic or German lore and fashioned what she took into literature distinguishably French, and had cast in a like national mold her borrowings from Flemish and German painting, and earlier from Byzantine art; so now, while she reveled in the Renaissance banquet, she digested what she took and made it a part of herself. But a third reason is to be found in that element of poise in the *esprit gaulois*; an attitude of philosophic gaiety, that while it can be serious, escapes the barrenness of too exclusive seriousness. Accordingly, in France at this period there was no unbridgable gap between religion and art. Catholics

## THE EARLY RENAISSANCE

and Reformers alike could be humanists, devoted to liberal culture, which did not, as in Italy, tend to paganism. Calvin himself was a prime absorber of humanism, deriving from it a lucidity, precision, grace and pregnancy of style that reacted most invigoratingly on the thought and literature of the period. Poise was displayed in the critical and practical spirit that characterized the acceptance of the new culture. Generally speaking, it was one of unqualified joy in the discovery, of restraint and discretion in the use of it. This affected to some extent the choice of subject matter; but still more the method of handling it. On the one hand, the inflated style of the "Rhetoriqueurs," which had crept into French writing toward the end of the fifteenth century, was abandoned for simple and direct expression; on the other, the vocabulary and structure of the language became enriched, more flexible and more subtle by contact with Italian and Classic literature. This was ultimately the effect that the Italian Renaissance exerted upon French painting.

The first printing press was set up in Paris in 1470, nine years before the birth of the great printer and editor, Jean Grolier. By the end of the century, presses had been established in eighteen other cities, scattered over the country from Caen in the North to the Southern town of Perpignan. The appetite for the new learning and the preparedness for it were, in fact, nation-wide. Hence it resulted that, when France obtained a hold on humanistic culture, she leapt at once into the position of being the European leader of scholarship. The University of Paris became the center of the movement,

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chiefly through the transcending ability of Gillaume Budé, better known by his Latinized name, Budæus. As librarian to Francis I, he formed a notable collection of Greek manuscripts and was the first to interpret the Greek texts on scientific and scholarly lines. He wrote as ably in the French tongue as in Greek and Latin; and was hailed by Calvin as “the foremost glory and support of literature, by whose service our France claims for herself to-day the palm of erudition.” Closely associated with his influence was that of the Hollander, Erasmus, who developed in Paris his scholarly genius, and then through his sojourn in Germany and England became one of the chief pioneers in spreading enlightenment throughout Europe. Other great names among the French scholars of the period were the Scaligers and the Étiennes.

It was characteristic of French scholarship that much of it was expended in spreading the knowledge of the Classics through translations in the vulgar tongue; the latter becoming matured, extended and subtilized in the process. The greatest of the contributors to this diffusion of knowledge was Jacques Amyot (1513–1593), whose chief work was the translation of “Plutarch’s Lives.” This book, as much through the quality of Amyot’s style as through its own intrinsic merits, immediately acquired a popularity in France, which spread to other countries; the French form, rather than the original Greek, becoming the basis of the various translations into other tongues. How it inspired Shakespeare is a matter of common knowledge, while its influence some two hundred years later on the growth of French

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thought which led to the Revolution is equally indisputable. The secret of its style is explained in the author's own advice—"Take heed and find the words that are fittest to signify the thing of which we mean to speak. Choose words which seem to be the pleasantest, which sound best in our ears, which are customary in the mouths of good talkers, which are honest natives and no foreigners." It is not difficult to see how the same principle can be applied to the technique of painting; as indeed it was by the original, as contrasted with the imitative, artists of the French Renaissance.

It is interesting to recall that during this century of literary activity, the French began to imitate the colonial activities of the Spaniards. Jacque Cartier, a native of St. Malo, born within a year of Columbus's discovery of America, made three voyages to Canada, respectively in 1534, 1535 and 1541; while simultaneously with the last year De Soto was exploring Louisiana.

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It was scarcely to be expected that the development of painting at this period could keep pace with that of literature; for the former had no such agent in its service as the printing-press. Scholars and writers were in the employ or under the patronage of royalty or nobility; but through the press they spoke to the public at large and thereby were encouraged to speak as Frenchmen. With the painter or sculptor it was necessarily different. He worked to please his patron, and the latter's taste for the most part followed the Italianate fashion, set by Francis I, whose disasters

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in Italy did not impair his admiration for Italian art. He invited to Fontainebleau Leonardo da Vinci, Andrea del Sarto, Il Rosso, Primaticcio and Niccolò dell' Abbatte and the sculptor, Benvenuto Cellini. Of these, Primaticcio exerted the greatest influence, since his sojourn in France extended over thirty years. His most noteworthy followers were Toussaint du Breuil (1561–1602) and Jean Cousin (1500?–1589), the latter a man of versatile gifts, practising also as an architect, sculptor, miniaturist, decorator and glassworker. He is represented in the Louvre by *The Last Judgment*. The scene is medieval in its conception and composed in close resemblance to the elaborate mystery plays of the sixteenth century; to that, for example, given at Valenciennes in 1547, of which a drawing still exists and is reproduced in Karl Mantzius' "History of Theatrical Art." The foreground in Cousin's picture is occupied by newly risen souls, some of whom are entering a cave, while others are being dragged off to Hell, which, as usual, is situated at the right of the scene. The clouds open overhead, revealing Christ, standing upon the globe of the earth, attended by the Virgin and St. John and a retinue of saints. Meanwhile the composition shows a marked advance in freedom and boldness of design, in knowledge of anatomy and foreshortening and in geometrical perspective. The picture, in its union of old feeling and new technical accomplishment stands in the same category as *The Last Judgment* of Van Orley in the Antwerp Museum.

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Meanwhile, notwithstanding the Italian invasion, a group of portrait painters, consisting of the Clouets and their pupils, preserved the characteristics, if not of strictly French, at least of Northern painting. For Jean Clouet, the father, otherwise called Jehannet, Jhannet or Janet, was a native of Flanders; while François Clouet, the most distinguished of the three sons, exhibits a style which suggests that he may have been a pupil of Holbein. The date of the father's birth is unknown, but about the year 1475 he moved to France and settled in Tours, where François was born in 1500.

To Jean Clouet the Louvre catalogue attributes the fine *Portrait of Francis I* (frontispiece). It represents the king about thirty years old, in a pearly satin doublet, striped with black velvet and embroidered in gold, resting his left hand on a balustrade covered with green velvet, while an arras damasked in two tones of dull claret red appears in the background. The very dark brown hair is dressed in a flat roll over the ears while the chin and cheeks are covered with the soft curly growth of a beard that has never known a razor. The expression of the face is sly and sensuous. If one compares the portrait with a later one (1007) of the same king, executed probably by a pupil of the Clouets, the change is significant. The face is puffier and coarsened, the complexion reddened, the expression that of the confirmed sensualist. The two pictures, as M. Geoffroy well says, exhibit respectively the youth and the maturity of the satyr. Clouet's portrait may also be compared, this time for technical interest, with Titian's Louvre portrait (1588), *Francis I.* The

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latter, of which many repetitions exist, was probably not made from life; but possibly from a medal. Pictorially, of course, the Titian is finer than the Clouet; exhibiting a masterful treatment of planes and surfaces, as well as a controlling knowledge and skill that has swept all into an ensemble as apparently spontaneous as it is magnificent. Alongside of it the Clouet is, no doubt, caligraphic rather than painterlike; in which respect it is interesting to compare it with the beautiful portrait by Ingres of *Madame Rivière* (p. 109). Yet in its very innocence of any brushwork *bravura*, in its close and prolonged analysis of values and the unremitting integrity with which the results of observation have been rendered, there is not only an assurance of fidelity of portraiture but a stirring suggestion of virility. If one's temperament inclines to prefer the less learned portrait, I don't think he need feel ashamed.

The same penetrating truth of characterization distinguishes the portraits by François (also called Jehannet) Clouet; while the precision is associated with increased fluency of brushwork and a more subtle harmonizing of the flesh-tints, costumes and background. The Louvre possesses his full length *Portrait of Charles IX*, of which a life-sized repetition exists in the Museum of Vienna; the latter bearing the inscription "Charles VIII, très chrétien roy de France, en l'age de XX ans, peint au vif per Jannet, 1563." It is supposed that both of these pictures were sent to Vienna in 1570, at the time of the young king's marriage to Elizabeth, daughter of the Emperor Maximilian. This

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portrait reveals a weak and vicious face, with the wary, cruel expression of a ferret. It bespeaks the character that two years later (1572) could countenance the treachery and political folly of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. Admiral Coligny, the most illustrious victim of the devilish plot and his enemy, the Duke of Guise, and many other men and women who enacted willing and unwilling rôles in the drama of the period are among the subjects represented in the Louvre's collection of historic portraits.

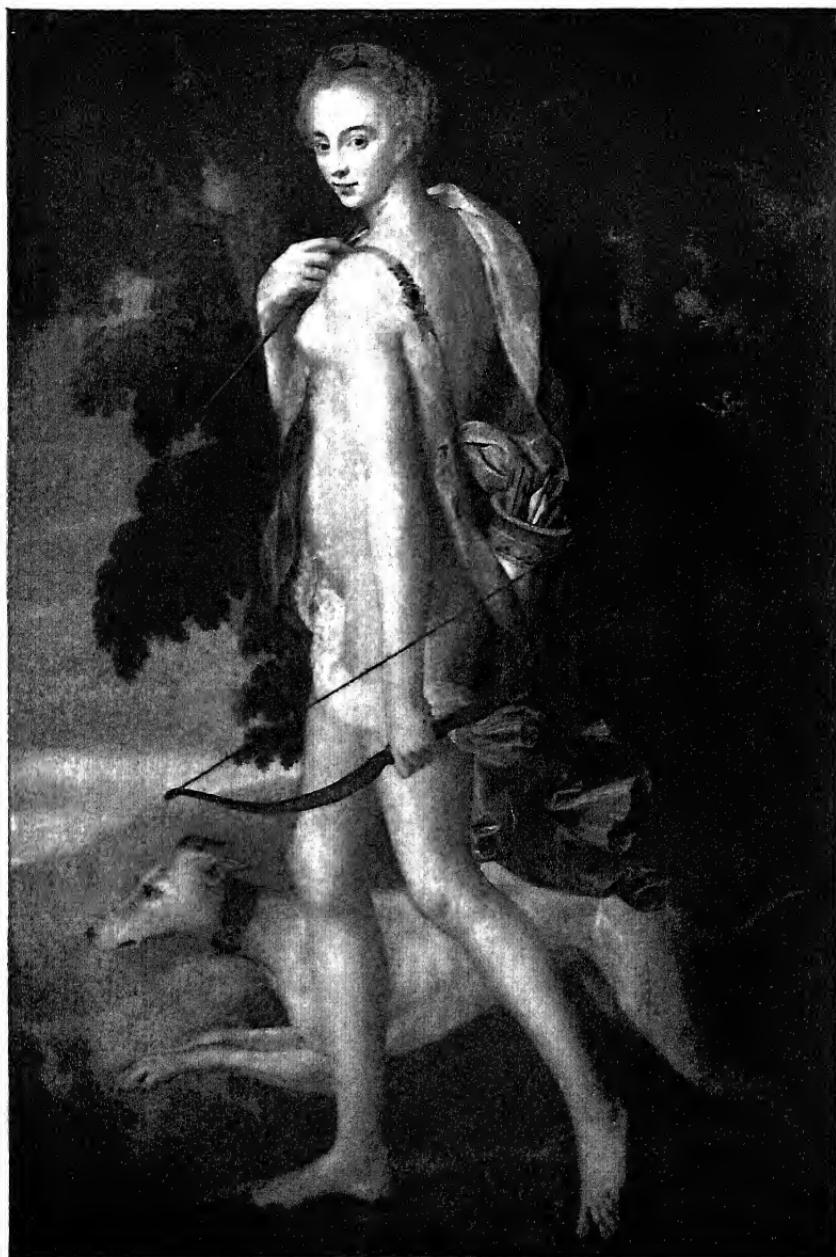
They suggest a momentary glance at the background of events following the death of Francis I in 1547. He was succeeded by his son, Henry II, who had married Catherine de' Medici. This able and unscrupulous woman, trained in the principles of Machiavelli, had ample scope for her prowess during the minority of her two sons, Francis II and Charles IX. The former succeeded his father in 1559 at the age of sixteen and died the following year, the Crown passing to his brother, at the time, a boy of ten. The latter reigned for fourteen years and was succeeded by Catherine de' Medici's third son, Henry III. The period of these three ignoble reigns is occupied with the struggle between Catholic and Huguenot parties. For the day of philosophic tolerance was past and war was carried on *à l'outrance* between the rival religionists. The reason for the change of feeling is to be found in the attitude of Francis I toward the aristocracy. Whereas it had been the policy of the preceding kings to subordinate the power of the latter to the authority of the Crown, Francis had courted popularity by lifting the

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aristocracy up to social equality with himself. It was his delight to pose as “the first gentleman of France.” The ultimate effect of this was to precipitate that complete cleavage between a privileged nobility and the rest of the nation, which after working untold suffering and wrong was to culminate in the Revolution. Meanwhile, during the minority of the young kings, the more powerful nobles asserted their rights to a share in the powers of the Regency. In the rivalry which ensued Catherine allied herself with the Catholic family of Guise and thus the struggle became one of politics as well as religion. The power of the Guise continued until their infamy in instigating the horrors of St. Bartholomew’s Eve had been avenged by the murder of themselves. This was contrived by Henry III, who himself paid the penalty the following year (1589), when he was assassinated by Jacques Clement, a Dominican friar.

The reign of this last of the rulers of the House of Valois was the most contemptible in the annals of the French monarchy. The profligacy of the Court, which under Francis I preserved some grace of gallantry, had been fomented by Catherine de’ Medici for political purposes, until respect for decent women disappeared and even the charm of the licentious palled. Henry chose his favorites among young men and even had the audacity to bestow places of authority upon these *mignons*. Protestants and Catholics alike were disgusted. The leader of the former was now the son of Antoine de Bourbon, Henry of Navarre, who had been drawn by the Queen dowager into a marriage with





DIANA

SCHOOL OF FONTAINEBLEAU  
LOUVRE

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Margaret, the dissolute sister of the king. To oppose his pretensions to the succession the Catholics founded The League to support the rival claims of the young Duke of Guise. On his deathbed the king named his brother-in-law as successor but warned him that none but a Catholic could reign over France. The forecast was realized. Although Henry defeated The League at the battle of Ivry, he found himself barred from Paris. Accordingly, after an indecisive struggle of several years he accepted Catholicism and was crowned as Henry IV, first King of the House of Bourbon. The discontent of the Protestants was allayed by his issue of the Edict of Nantes. Having established his power, he obtained a divorce from Margaret and married Marie de' Medici, whom Rubens later commemorated in the series of historic decorations that are now in the Louvre. Henry met his death at the hands of the assassin, Ravaillac.

By those who wish to study the painting of the so-called School of Fontainebleau a visit must be made to the Château, which owes its most characteristic splendor to the successive efforts of Francis I, Henry II and Henry IV. "The King's Staircase" which leads to the apartments of Francis' mistress, the Duchesse d' Étampes, is adorned with frescoes, variously ascribed to Primaticcio, Il Rosso and Niccolò Dell' Abbate. In them Francis is depicted as Alexander the Great in a series of scenes from the life of the Macedonian conqueror. Francis also erected the gallery which bears his name and the magnificent *Salle des Fêtes*. He

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lived to complete the decoration of the former with mythological subjects executed by Il Rosso; but the embellishment of the latter was undertaken by Henry II, in honor of Diane de Poitiers. His initial, linked with that of his mistress, appears in all directions amid bows, arrows, and crescents, the emblems of Diana, while the panels are filled with eight large compositions and fifty smaller ones, embodying scenes from mythology.

So thoroughly identified is Fontainebleau with the memory of Diane de Poitiers that it is something of a shock to the sense of romance to recall that the lady was twenty years the senior of her royal lover; old enough, in fact, to be his mother. But Henry was quite a passionless person and only followed his father's example in adopting a mistress because the custom seemed to be *de rigueur*. And Diane herself played rather the part of a prudent directoress, whose influence on the king was edifying. Regarded, indeed, from the point of view of her contemporaries, the position of Diane was magnificent and divine, for her relations with the king represented to them the perfect type of Platonism, at once practical and sacred. Du Bellay voiced this in a poem in her honor—"God had made you appear among us like a miracle, that you may possess the soul of this great King, whose faith is inviolable, and that his affection through your perfection may burn with a holy flame." And he adds, "You have won the heart of all France."

This Platonistic tendency, borrowed from the Italians, strange as it may seem from the modern point of view,

was in a measure the expedient of women of refinement to hold at bay the coarseness of the men. Nevertheless, it was a symptom of decadence and held in it the disease of profligacy which followed. Meanwhile its vogue explains the spirit which prompted and saw nothing incongruous in the sculptor Goujon's representation of the king's mistress as a nude Diana, reclining upon a stag, surrounded by her hounds; a group which originally adorned the front of Diane's palatial Château d'Anet. It is now in the Louvre, where its beauty can be enjoyed for its intrinsic charm. Goujon was the typical sculptor of the French Renaissance; the one who most happily enriched his Northern temperament with the grace and fluency of the Italian. Yet how completely he escaped a servitude to the Italian influence may be seen by comparing this group with the *Nymph of Fontainebleau* by Benvenuto Cellini, which to some extent must have been Goujon's model. The Cellini, in the exuberance of the bosom and turbulent pose of the abdomen, betrays the decadence of style that the misunderstood example of Michelangelo was promoting, while the long slender legs are more than a little meaningless and the expression of the face is trivial and formal. Goujon's Diana, on the contrary, is instinct with nature; monumental, it is true, and sublimated, but still woman, a synthesis of the purity and vigor of splendid womanhood. She is exquisitely personal; nevertheless aloof. Indeed it is this quality of humanness, touched with abstraction, that seems to be the secret of its fascination to the modern mind.

A corresponding quality distinguishes the painting

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(1013) *Diana* (p. 47) which is one of the few examples of the School of Fontainebleau comprised in the Louvre. The hair is blond, the flesh pale rosy cream; the drapery of golden buff silk; the hanger of the quiver a delicate blue, with dainty jewels; the color of the greyhound cream; the background, dull olive green foliage and a gray blue, characteristically Parisian sky. The drawing and modeling of the young figure betrays no learned assurance, the pose no artifice. The artist has rendered, with simple fidelity, his model. No sophistication intervenes. The maiden bears the charm of unconscious nakedness rather than conscious nudity; veiled with the naïveté of her artless purity. The painter doubtless owed much to Italian influence, but his spirit was distinguishably French.

## CHAPTER IV

### ABSOLUTISM AND THE SUN KING

WHEN Louis XIII, a child of nine years old, was raised to the throne in 1610, the country was still torn asunder by Leaguers and Huguenots. The leaders of both factions encroached upon the royal power; there was as yet no middle class strong enough to assert its rights and the masses of the people were practically serfs. Authority existed nowhere. Under the circumstances, if it were to exist at all, it must be in the person of the sovereign. Louis XI had realized this and intrigued successfully to achieve it. Under his successors, however, what he had won was dissipated, and at no time was the crown more impotent than in the early years of the seventeenth century. The queen regent, Marie de' Medici, was of weak character and sought refuge from the insolence of the nobility in Italian favorites. When she married her son at the age of fourteen to Anne of Austria, it was to introduce another feminine influence no less weak and unprincipled. There were two queens at court but no king, for Louis from the start, while not without ability, lacked all capacity of concentration and persistence. He was as completely a *roi fainéant* as any of the later kings of the Carlovingian dynasty, and the

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equivalent of a mayor of the palace appeared in Cardinal Richelieu.

From his appearance at court in 1619 until his death in 1642 Richelieu worked with one end steadily in view —the revival of the policy of Louis XI. His own ambition found its scope and satisfaction in converting the monarchy into an absolutism, which he wielded on behalf of the royal puppet. The latter survived his great minister only one year, having in the meantime followed Richelieu's dying admonition to give his confidence to Cardinal Mazarin. Again, as so often in French history, the new king was a minor and during the life of his minister Louis XIV showed little sign of independence. He subserved the intrigues of Anne, the queen mother, and Mazarin by marrying Maria Luisa, the daughter of Philip IV of Spain; the ceremony being conducted on the Isle of Pheasants, in the little frontier river of Bidassoa. Velasquez had charge of the preparations and festivities and was so exhausted by the ordeal that he died a few months later. By the terms of the marriage contract both Louis and his bride forswore for themselves and their heirs all pretensions to succeed to the Spanish crown. This agreement, by the way, in 1700 on the death of Charles II, the last of the Hapsburg line of Spanish Kings, Louis XIV, then in the plenitude of his power, found it convenient to ignore, thus precipitating the War of the Spanish Succession.

Before he submitted to the political exigencies of this marriage with the Infanta, the young king had been enamored of the nieces of his cardinal minister. He

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was now allowed to solace himself with the charms of Madame de la Vallière. But an end of mere dalliance was at hand. Mazarin died during the year which succeeded the Spanish marriage; regretting chiefly that he must be separated by death from the magnificent pictures and works of art, which he had set the fashion of collecting. When the council met and the secretary inquired of Louis to whom he should present his reports in the future the king's curt reply was *Moi*. There and then, at the age of twenty-three, he adopted the principle, that he upheld for fifty-five years, *l'état c'est moi*. His first act was to appoint Colbert Minister of Finance, whose long and faithful service put the treasury on a basis of certainty and affluence, which enabled Louis to satisfy his ambition to triumph in war and to shine as *le Roi Soleil* among obsequious courtiers. Without going into particulars it is enough to recall that Louis XIV justified his title of *le Grand Monarque* by raising France to a position of influence in the politics of Europe which made her everywhere respected. It was not until in the decline of his personal vigor, when he had married Madame de Maintenon, the widow of the writer Scarron, who had been tutor to his illegitimate children, and under her influence turned *devote* and came under the control of the Jesuits, that the splendor of The Sun King began to decline. The War of the Spanish Succession proved disastrous to the French armies, which were successfully opposed by Marlborough; the resources of the kingdom, no longer husbanded by Colbert, became absorbed in deficits, and a series of deaths in the royal household, which the suspicion of the times

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attributed to poisoning, instigated by the king's dissolute nephew, the Duke of Orleans, darkened the old king's end.

Meanwhile, *le grand Siècle*, *le Siècle de Louis Quatorze*, was prolific both in art and letters. The king himself affected to be the autocrat of both. The temper of the time was official. As the chaos of society yielded to the formative and consolidating influence of the royal authority, the aftermath of the French Renaissance grew to be systematization. The Roman element in the French genius asserted itself and set its definite and enduring impress upon French art and letters.

For the genius of Rome had been displayed less in originality than in judicious adaptation of a variety of examples to its own needs and circumstances. And this involved a systematizing of means to ends which, while it did little to encourage individual artists, trained up a host of competent craftsmen; a system of standardized style and widely comprehensive practical efficiency.

Richelieu had established about 1629 the Académie Française, for the purpose of controlling the French language and regulating literary taste. The trend, thus set, was furthered in Louis XIV's reign by the recognized critical influence of Malherbe and Boileau. Its immediate result was to replace the imaginative and singing qualities of the earlier French poetry with a system of metrical versification, sometimes rising to heights of grandeur and beauty, but more usually characterized by its fitness for narrative description, as in La Fontaine's *Fables* and, for heroic dialogue as in the dramas of Corneille and Racine. With both these

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dramatists individual characterization is replaced by types of character; quick interchange of dialogue yields to lengthy speeches and action on the stage is supplanted by descriptions of what has occurred off stage and by elaborate reflections and dissertations on the part of the actors. In all these respects Corneille differs radically from his older contemporary, Shakespeare, and Racine, coming later, fixed these traits on the so-called classic drama of France.

It has been remarked, no doubt with justice, by a French writer that only a Frenchman, and by no means all Frenchmen, can appreciate at its proper estimate the value of Racine. The latter is, in fact, the product of a quality in the French genius that is enduring in the race, to-wit, its heritage of the Roman tradition. This must unquestionably be taken into account by every conscientious student of French art, who would try to reach its inwardness through putting himself as far as may be, in the mental attitude of the French themselves.

Among the organized influences of the period that of the coterie or salon played an important rôle. The most famous of them, the Hôtel de Rambouillet, had been established some fourteen years before the institution of the Academy as a protest against the puerility and license of society and as an encouragement of literary taste and style. The ladies of the group called themselves *Les Précieuses*, the men, *Esprit Doux*. This coterie, comprising among others, Richelieu, Descartes, the reformer of Philosophy in France, Corneille, Bossuet, La Rochefoucauld, the famous author

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of the *Maxims*, and Madame de Sevigny, one of the most brilliant of letter-writers, exercised at first a salutary influence. But in time the effort to devulgarize the French tongue lead to the invention of literary conceits, such as strew the pages of Mademoiselle de Scudéry and other writers of heroic romances; and justified the satire of Molière, whose "*Precieuses Ridi-cules*" gave the cult its deathblow.

In summing up the literary aspects of the period George Saintsbury says: "In the special characteristics of the genius of the French, which may be said to be clearness, polish of form and expression, and a certain quality which perhaps cannot be so well expressed by any other word as by alertness, the best work of the seventeenth century has no rivals. The charm of precision, of elegance, of expressing what is expressed in the best possible manner belongs to it in a supreme degree."

The same words are applicable to describe at least the trend of the development of French painting during this period; for its actual attainment of the above qualities belongs rather to the eighteenth century, when the French spirit was able to express itself more freely. Under Louis XIV French art had not only a patron, but an arbiter, who imposed his own will and taste upon obsequious courtier-painters. Art was officialized, firstly by the autocratic personality of the monarch, whose standard, if not so expressed was virtually *l'art c'est moi*; and secondly by the royal establishment of the Academy of Painting and Sculpture.

What Fontainebleau had been as an expression of the Italianized spirit of the French Renaissance, Versailles

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became to the Roman tendency of the seventeenth century. The former grew up at the call of three kings; the spirit of woman still haunts it; it lies embosomed in the natural beauties of the Forest. Versailles, on the contrary, is the climax of artifice; summoned into being by one man and loaded with his personality. For one needs to be reminded that Louis XIII commenced the Palace and Louis Philippe added wings to it. To the imagination Versailles means Louis XIV. Nature had supplied a waste of sandy tract; he bid Le Nôtre convert it into terraces, esplanades and fountains, bordered by a mimic forest, with artificial lakes, waterfalls, rocks and glens. With a Roman's largeness of plan and repetition of design, he summoned the façades of the palace into rigid uniformity of line fronting the parade ground of extended terraces. Everything is grandiose and oppressively monotonous and artificial. It entombs the autocracy of Louis Quarze and the formalism of "Le Grand Siècle" as unmistakably as the Escorial does the body of Philip II and the soul of Spanish Catholicism.

Yet inside and outside the Palace the French genius proclaims itself in an exuberance of invention, facility and skill. Le Nôtre is still unrivaled as a landscape architect, while Le Brun and his regiment of painters displayed as inexhaustible a resourcefulness in the interior decorations. That they were courtier-flatterers, obsequiously producing pictorial rhodomontade to extol the one-man needs no enforcement; or that their output affects one with impatient fatigue. Yet it would be heedless to overlook the exuberance and the

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facility that these men displayed, symptomatic at least of the fecundity of the French spirit after it had been fertilized by Italian influence. What they would have made of themselves if they had been free of the régime of the Court, as were Poussin and Claude Lorrain, can be only conjectured. Perhaps, however, they had in themselves that Roman element which leaned toward and found its best capabilities in the regimental system.

This also may be true of the Court portrait-painters headed by Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659–1743) and Nicolas Largillièvre (1656–1746), although on the whole, these two exhibit more individual character than the decorators. Rigaud, particularly, is a strong man whose virile personality comes to the surface of the prodigious amount of display that the circumstances of the time compelled him to adopt. Observe, for example, his (981) *Portrait of Louis XIV* in the Louvre. Painted in 1701, it represents the king at the age of sixty-three, when his days of gallantry were passed. The puffy face is not imposing under its brown *perruque*. Stiffness and pomposity characterize the pose of the figure, planted on its white silk-encased legs; the exaggerated superbness of the blue velvet mantle, heavy with silver fleur-de-lys, massed upon the floor and turned back to reveal the sumptuousness of the ermine lining; and the paraphernalia of the throne, crimson canopy, column and the Crown and Hood of Justice, lying on a stool. Yet it is a shallow study that does not discover beneath all this panoply of ostentation the essential force of physical and mental manhood which made it possible



PORTRAIT OF BOSSUET

LOUVRE

HYACINTHE RIGAUD



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for the Grand Monarch to impose his will so absolutely. That it does assert itself to a degree which explains and almost justifies the obsequiousness of its acceptance by his subjects is the measure of Rigaud's bigness. None but a painter who himself was endowed with mental and physical force could have interpreted the subject so plausibly; nay more, with such convincingness.

And for corroboration and heightened admiration of Rigaud's greatness turn to his (783) *Portrait of Bossuet*, which worthily holds a place among the masterpieces of the Salon Carré. The "Eagle of Meaux," as his contemporaries called the great preacher because of the survey and grasp that his sermons involved, was distinguished in his finest utterances by an extraordinary majesty of rhetoric and imposing grandeur of manner. Although he almost always aimed at the sublime, he scarcely ever overstepped it or fell into the bombastic and ridiculous. This characterization of George Saintsbury's might be applied to Rigaud's portrait. It is in a worthy sense a heroic canvas; but the heroic is modified, the sumptuousness mellowed, the ostentation assuaged. It is nobly assertive, yet with a refined control. And then, how genial the face with its straight and fearless glance and simple candor of expression!

Like the portrait of the king, it was engraved by the younger Drevet, one of that band of French engravers who added so much luster to the art of the period. In the logic of their line and the purity and vigor of expression they have never been surpassed. Indeed, it may be contended with much reasonableness that the

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French engravers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries represent in pictorial form the finest intellectuality of the period.

While Rigaud reflects the influence of his sojourn in Rome, Largillière was trained in Antwerp and later studied under Sir Peter Lely in London. His measure as a painter may be best discovered in (491) *Portraits of Largillière, his Wife and Daughter*. The picture betrays the affectations, as well as the excellent disposition of draperies and treatment of textures that the artist had learned from Lely. It also has a curious psychological interest in the way in which Largillière, while preserving the courtly style, has tempered it to his family group; has, as it were, domesticated it. The figures are seated, shown to a little below the waist. The artist, in a gray, long wig and drab suit, holds a gun and fondles a spaniel, a dead partridge lying beside him. His daughter, dressed in a dove-gray gown, trimmed with gold, holds a sheet of music, while the mother, in a crimson robe with her hair powdered, carries herself with easy and gracious alertness. The whole group is painted with breadth and spirit. After one has accepted the airs and graces of the picture as characteristic of the age, one's first suspicion of its sentimentality disappears in a recognition of the sincerity of technique and intention.

As the seventeenth century progressed French painters became the leaders in that invasion of Italy, which ultimately resulted in the general Italianizing of European art. The effects on the whole were disastrous. For, while the earlier influence of a still living Italian cul-

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ture had fertilized the native spirit of the countries that it touched, this later contact with the dead-hand chilled original impulse into soulless imitation. Even in France, where the consequences were less severe, there ensued a period of Italianate conventions, represented, for example, in Simon Vouet, a mild version of the great somersault-artist, Le Brun; in the suave amiability of Le Sueur's Raphaelesque compositions; and in the more dramatic and interesting subjects of Bon de Boulongne (1649–1717), which suggest the influence of Caravaggio; in the flower pieces of Jean Baptist Monnoyer (1634–1699) and the game and hunting subjects of François Desportes (1661–1742).

Meanwhile, a more honestly personal note appears in Sébastien Bourdon (1616–1671). The last named varied his compilation of religious compositions with a few genuinely observed and simply rendered genre subjects and with at least one fine portrait. This is the bust (78) *Portrait of the Philosopher, Descartes*: low-toned, grayish flesh; large lucid eyes; a bearing and expression full of character, devoid of any display; a human record, arresting and authoritative.

Further, there are the three brothers, Antoine, Louis and Mathieu Le Nain, whose lives cover the period from 1588–1677. Natives of Laon, they preserved the independence that characterizes the French provincial, and, although they came to Paris to perfect themselves in their art, resisted alike the influence of Italy and the domination of Le Brun. Little is known of them beyond the meager facts that Antoine painted miniatures, Louis some bust portraits and that Mathieu was

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appointed painter of the town of Laon; while all three were elected to membership in the Academy at its foundation in 1648. This denotes broad and liberal policy in the king's appointments, for nothing could be farther from other officially encouraged art of the day than the work of these three brothers. The examples in the Louvre are grouped in the catalogue under their combined names, since no data exists which can identify the individual pictures with any one of them. They are genre pictures, mostly of rural subjects—(540) *The Forge*, (541) *Rustic Meal*, (542) *Return of the Haymakers*, and so forth; executed in a tonality of gray and brown, very quiet and simple in expression, and exhibiting a direct and careful study of nature. One of them (544), *Procession in a Church*, is distinguished by the richness of the costumes. All are akin to the contemporary genre subjects of Holland and Flanders and anticipate the peasant genre of the nineteenth century.

## CHAPTER V

### POUSSIN AND CLAUDE LORRAIN

**T**HAT the Italianate convention was less disastrous to France than to other countries is due to two causes. One has already been alluded to: that France had a vigorous native growth in art and literature, ready for fertilization, strong enough to resist absorption. The second cause is to be found in the personality and influence of Nicolas Poussin and, in a less degree, of Claude Lorrain. The artistic career of these two is identified with Italy and particularly Rome; yet they never ceased to be Frenchmen and shaped the Italian ideal to the needs of the racial genius.

Poussin was the father of the French Classical School, inasmuch as it was his example that blazed the track for the newly formed Academy of Painting and Sculpture, which has led on to the present day. Born in Les Andelys in Normandy, 1594, of good family, he showed an early fondness for art. Among his teachers was Philippe de Champaigne (1602–1674), a portrait painter of rare seriousness, whose portraits stand out with dignified simplicity and forthright humanness amid the showier productions of the time. But, although his best years were spent in France, he was of Flemish origin, and is regarded by the French as a member of that school. Flanders had long been

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the traditional source of much French inspiration and Champaigne's influence may well have been one by which the grave, stalwart young Norman, Poussin, was impressed. He had learned to draw by copying prints of pictures by Raphael, and the latter's pupil, Giulio de Romano. In time he found his way to Rome, where he tempered his admiration of Raphael with study of Roman bas-relief sculpture. Meanwhile, as befitted a son of the North, Poussin gradually discovered another direct inspiration in landscape. Out of these three elements he constructed for himself a motive and method, distinguished by a union of nature and of architectonic repose and stability, in which a balance is maintained between the figures and the landscape. His well-known example of the Louvre, *Et Ego in Arcadia*, with its Raphaelesque balance and loveliness of expression, its extended composition of the figures in three flat planes and the simple beauty of the landscape, represents most characteristically his triune motive. In the very many other examples, which the same museum is fortunate enough to possess, the basis of the motive is less easily detected, for the artist was designing with greater freedom of personal expression.

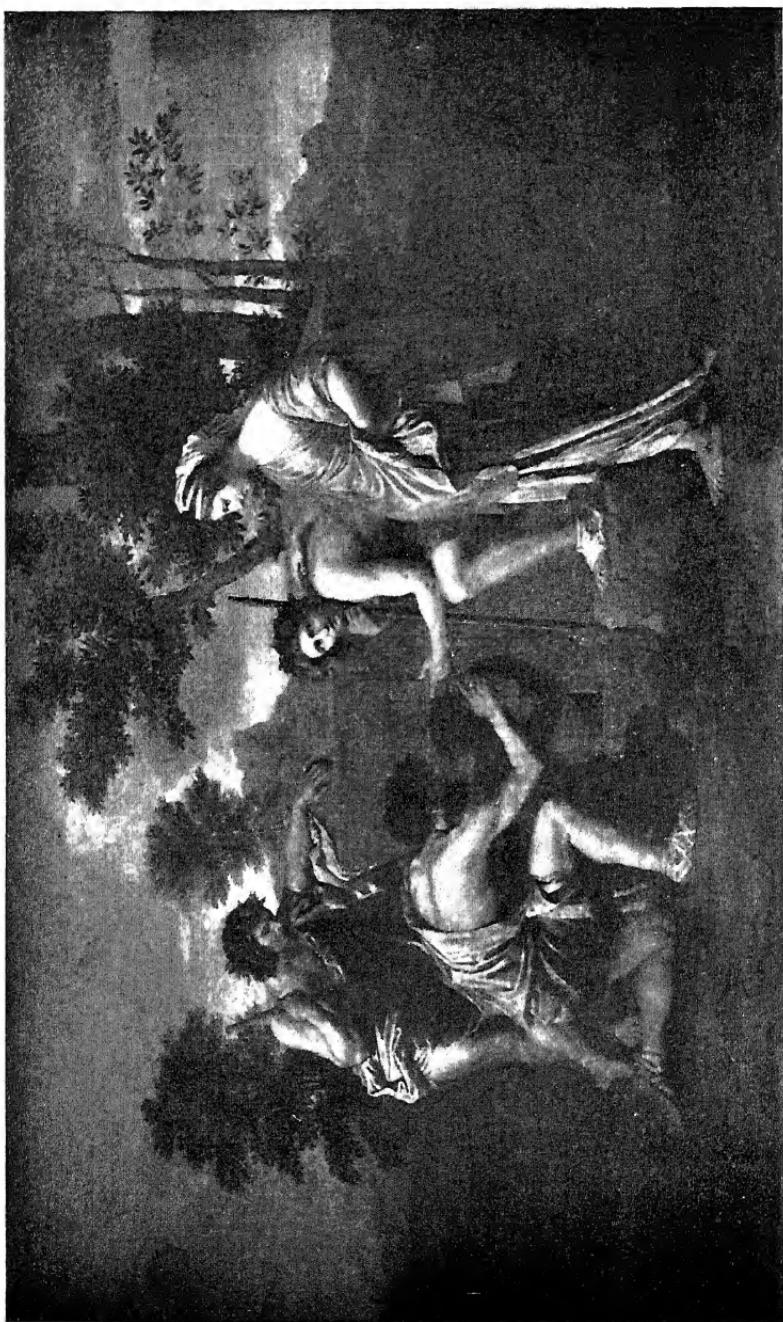
The titles of Poussin's pictures betray the French leaning toward a literary subject. For example, *Time shelters Truth from the Attacks of Envy and Discord*, has a discouraging note, suggestive of the worst features of the Italianate convention. But it is not for the subject that one learns to look at a Poussin. Interest becomes absorbed in the extraordinary beauty of the landscape and in the suave nobility of the composition.



NICOLAS POUSSIN

ANNE GALLART

ET EGO IN ARCADIA



## POUSSIN AND CLAUDE LORRAIN

Poussin, one discovers not only to have been the first of the great school of French landscape, but also to have remained unsurpassed in his ability to infuse the naturalness of the scene with architectonic dignity. And in this his treatment of the figure plays a determining part. The truth is that his classicism goes back of Italian and Roman. He exhibits that affinity with the Hellenic spirit which appears, as we have noted, at intervals in French art. How redolent of what one dreams of Hellas and yet how finely French in character are (738) *Autumn*, in which the Israelite spies are returning from the Promised Land, laden with grapes; (737) *Summer*, with Ruth and Boaz in the harvest field, and (738) *Spring, the Earthly Paradise!* These are landscapes of an ideal loveliness, inspired by a sincere love of nature. Except for a visit to France during 1640–1642, Poussin remained in Italy, dying at Rome in 1665.

Claude Gellée, better known as Claude Lorrain, was born at Château de Chamagne near Toul, Lorrain, in 1600. One account says that he was apprenticed to a pastry-cook, another that, having lost both his parents, he crossed the Rhine to Freiburg and received instruction from a wood-carver and engraver. It is agreed that he made his way to Naples and studied architecture, and perspective and color under a German painter, Gottfried Waels. Then he moved to Rome and entered the service of the painter, Agostino Tassi, in the capacity of an attendant. Later he set out on a tour of travel which brought him back to his native village.

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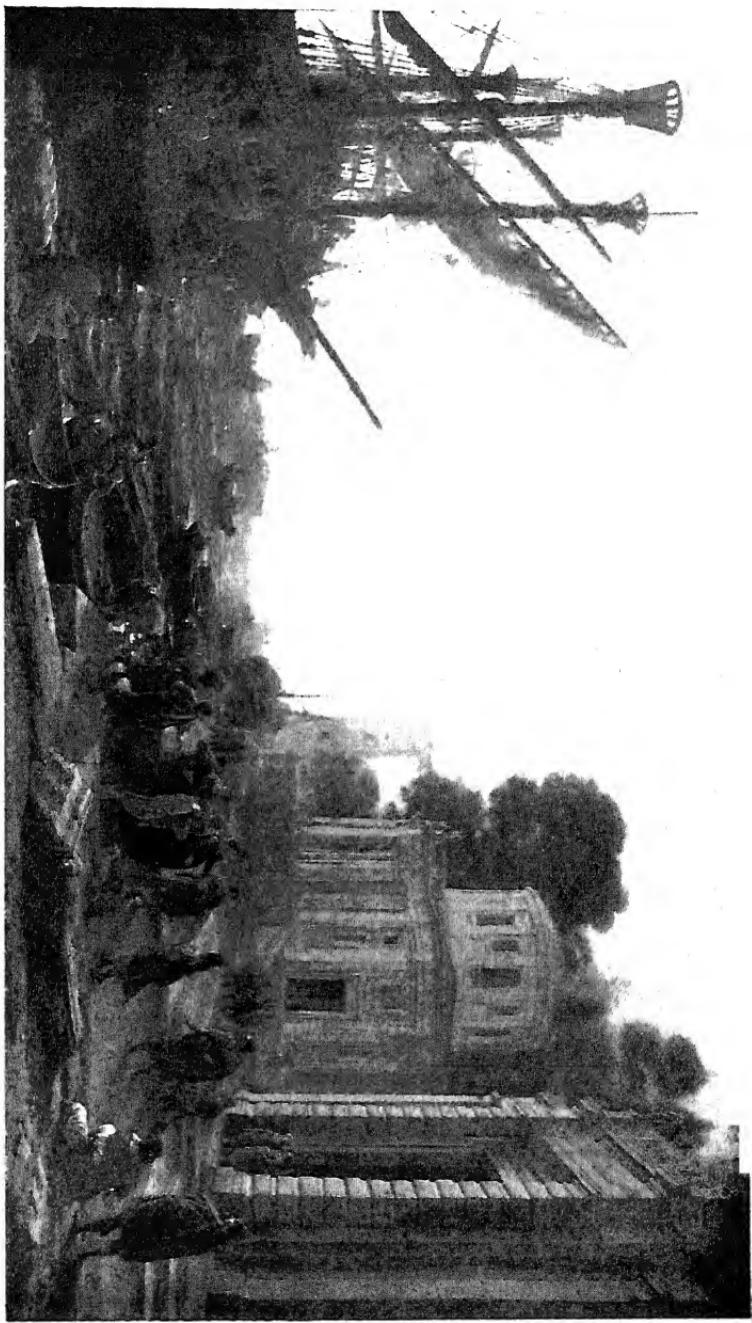
But his stay was short; he seems to have felt the call of Italy and returned thither never to leave it. He died in 1682.

A student of nature, constantly drawing in the open air, he gradually acquired the style which won the appreciation of his contemporaries and secured him a popularity that lasted on into the nineteenth century. It represents a shrewd assembling of features of nature-study, drawn from diverse places, and is particularly distinguished by its introduction of architectural details. By these means he built up a composition, as stable as it is ingratiating, its heroic character pleasantly animated with groups of lively figures. In his fondness for warm sunshine he is akin to the Hollander, Cuyp; but instead of the latter's pastoral wholesomeness the feeling of Claude's pictures is rather that of sweet and gracious suavity. His world is one from which all hint of irregularity and conflict is removed; wrapped in inviolable repose. It is a mannered world, tempered and attuned to gentle sentiments by artifice; a vindication of good taste rather than an idealization of nature. It is in this respect that he may be judged to fall short of Poussin, who, on the other hand, when he relies upon architecture instead of nature, is inferior to Claude. The latter, in fact, for all his nature study, appears to have had none of the profound love of nature which elevated Poussin. Claude is much less a landscape painter than a contriver of beautiful scenic effects; not Classic in spirit as was Poussin but a clever and alluring manipulator of the ingredients of the classical formula. That his work held the fancy of the sentimen-

LANDING OF CLEOPATRA AT TARSUS

LOUVRE

CLAUDE LORRAIN





## POUSSIN AND CLAUDE LORRAIN

tally classicized taste of the eighteenth century and that Poussin had to wait until our own day for a revival of appreciation are equally intelligible.

These two contemporaries, while representative of the trend of their time toward the Italian and the Roman vogue, maintained their identity as Frenchmen and shaped the foreign influence to their native genius, producing a new mode of pictorial subject. Each set a motive for the new Academy, the impress of which has endured to the present day. The Claude tradition has persisted in the Academic habit of improving upon nature and of repeating the obvious externals of the Classic style; while that of Poussin is discernible in many artists who lived outside the pale of the Academy and yet were truly Classic in spirit; Corot, for example, Millet, and Harpignies, to mention only three.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE ROCOCO

**I**N 1717 Parisians enjoyed two new sensations. Watteau's diploma picture, *Embarking for the Island of Cythera*, marked his admission to the Academy of Painting and Sculpture and Mlle. Adrienne Lecouvreur made her début at the Comédie Française. Both events were the heralds of a new era.

The Grand Monarque, dead two years, had been succeeded by his great grandson, Louis XV, a child of five, with the pleasure-loving Duke of Orleans as Regent. The gloom of the Court had been dissipated in sunshine. Relieved of official incubus, the Gallic spirit floated lightly on the freer air. Immediately it found its apotheosis in Watteau's masterpiece, which pitched the key for the melodies of the Rococo period. At the same time it found expression in the Lecouvreur's natural, as opposed to the artificial, art of acting. The one was a sublimating of actual conditions by the magic of art, and the other an enfranchisement of art by wedding it with nature. These were the elements which fermented the eighteenth century; the gaysome pursuit of beauty and the serious study of nature. It is the former only that usually occupies the historian of art of this period.

## THE ROCOCO

It is customary, in fact, to regard the eighteenth century in France as solely identified with the Rococo style of art and since this, as every other style always and everywhere, declined, to consider the period one of unrelieved decadence and to dismiss it with more or less lack of sympathy and interest. A period of decadence, certainly it was, for there were elements in the social conditions that were moribund; but also other elements which, however blindly, were making for vitality. The century, indeed, should rather be regarded as one of transition in which old forms were being replaced by new, as the experiment of autocracy was to be succeeded by the later one, still not yet solved, of popular rule. For the point overlooked is, that society at this period was not entirely composed of courtiers and bent on frivolity. This is the mistake which comes of confining historical study to the political intrigues that center round the throne; and taking no account at the same time of a people's development, as it is expressed in its trend of thought and through its arts, sciences and social conditions.

Society at the opening of the eighteenth century already included intellectual and literary elements. The Grand Monarch had patronized both, while the Academy and coteries increased their prestige. So far, the thinkers and men of letters had been to a considerable extent compelled to obsequiousness by these various forms of beaureaucratic control. Now they were to share in the freer air that pervaded the period. It is significant to recall that at the date with which this chapter opened, Voltaire was twenty-three years old;

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Montesquieu, twenty-eight; while Diderot and Jean Jacques Rousseau were children, respectively of four and five years. These were shortly to become leaders in a mental revolution which prepared the way for the political and social Revolution. This, it should be recalled, in anticipation, was to suffer from the manner of its bringing on. It had no stability at first, because it was founded, not on the demands and convictions of the masses of the people, but upon theories derived from the thinkers and writers. The latter, as usual, were the leaders, but, unfortunately for France, without a phalanx of thought to back them. They were not giving expression to the masses, but spinning their theories in the atmosphere exhaled by themselves.

The eighteenth century involved a breaking up of recognized conventions and a casting about for panaceas and new standards. Chief of these was what to-day with humorous seriousness we call "a return to nature." While philosophers argued for it, society practised it. It was fashionable to emulate the simplicity of the country folk; for had not Rousseau declared that if there is any virtue left it must be looked for among the lower classes?

The changed mood of society is closely represented in the painting of the time. The painters of the *Fête Galantes* continue to contribute to the gay dance of fashion, though gradually the Gardens of the Luxembourg are replaced by country scenes and the lovers disport themselves with sentimental tenderness in the garb of dainty peasants. Meanwhile Chardin contributes to the change of taste his exquisite bourgeois

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genre and Greuze commemorates the imagined virtues of the proletariat. These two artists, in fact, are a natural part of their time and not the exceptions to its general trend, as is suggested by those students of art who insist upon viewing the eighteenth century solely as the period of the Rococo.

From the early days of the Regency the soil was ready for the seed of simpler tastes. After the stifling pomp and ponderous gloom of the last years of the Grand Monarch, court society was eager for a freer and fresher elegance. The Luxembourg rather than Versailles became the nucleus of fashion. Moreover, society began to seek relief from the eternal routine of court life in private entertaining, and the hôtels of the Faubourg St. Germain rivaled one another in elegance. The smaller apartment and salon were in vogue, and the skill and inventiveness of French designers were expended in converting the heavier and more elaborate furnishings and decorations of Louis Quatorze into the exquisite refinements of the style of Louis Quinze. It is a style that in its elegant exuberance, its airy invention and charm and tact of taste is a direct expression of the Gallic spirit. And it was the setting, it must not be forgotten, of the paintings of the period. Either occupying a panel in the wall or ceiling or added as cabinet pictures, they are in scale and spirit an integral part of the exquisiteness of the ensemble. To-day, unfortunately, we see them divorced from it; blossoms plucked from the flower-bed and set in strange and incongruous surroundings. The fact has done much to estrange the sympathy of students from the art of this

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period, which to Frenchmen seems the purest product of the distinctively French spirit.

Of this beautiful garden of painting Antoine Watteau was the master hand. Born in Valenciennes in 1684, he made his way to Paris and in time entered the studio of Claude Gillot, a painter, designer and draftsman of sprightly and original fancy, who directed his pupil's attention to the scenes of the Italian Comedy and to decoration. Later Watteau found a home with Claude Audran, one of the first decorative artists of the day and custodian of the Luxembourg. Here he was able to study the Marie de' Medici decorations by Rubens and feast his imagination on the vistas of landscape in the palace gardens. In 1712 he took up his abode with Crozat, the collector of old masters in whose gallery he became acquainted with Venetian painting. In these particulars we have the summary of Watteau's external influences: experience in decoration, the impulse of Rubens's prolific invention and mastery of form and movement, the richness and dignity of Venetian coloring. The rest was Watteau and the Gallic spirit which was incarnated in him. It put the *cachet* of fine art on his decoration; refined and subtilized the Rubens inspiration and translated the mannered splendor of the Venetians into familiar elegance. Finally the result was impressed with the seriousness of Watteau's own temperament; that of a consumptive, passionately in love with beauty, haunted with the specter of early death and cherishing hungrily every moment in which he could yet work. Hence the qualities of impersonality and aloof-

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ness in his art. The world of sight, transmuted by his poet's imagination, became purged of its mundane elements, spiritually recreated into a vision of abstract, universal beauty.

The *Embarcation*, for example (the original picture is 982 of the Louvre; there is an elaborated version of it in the Royal Palace in Berlin), is a poet's vision of the eternal springtime of youth and love, of happy, care-free yielding to the soft promptings of nature and the loveliness of life. Nature looks her loveliest; the air is aquiver with the fluttering of infant loves; the lovers, gaily hued, and as fancy-free as flowers, dally on the mossy bank, gather to the pleasure-craft or strain their eyes toward the golden horizon of their desires, absorbed in the eternity of the present and the stingless dream of pleasure. Watteau himself at this time was a prey to mental and physical distress. He died four years later.

The *Gilles* (p. 79), No. 983 in the Lacaze collection of the Louvre, has the distinction of being a life-sized figure. His French name does not hide the fact that he is one of the Italian comedians, whose *Commedia dell'arte*, so called because it was a performance by professionals, had been popular during the French Renaissance and had done much to extend the scope and subtilize the methods of the French stage. Banished during the latter years of the Grand Monarch, they had returned with the bright days of the Regency. *Gilles* wears his clown's costume of creamy white, shadowed to olive in the hollows; rose ribbons garnish his shoes, and his drab hat shows against the delicate blue of the

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sky. Below the slope of the mound on which he stands appear the black-garbed *Il Dottore* on a donkey, *Il Capitano* in a rose-colored vest and cap, *Columbine* and another. The statue of a satyr lurks in the shadow of the orange, tawny trees. The actors of the Italian Comedy, despite the extravagance of their humor and comic business, were serious artists, lifting the spirit of comedy to a high level of finished impersonation. It is this aspect of the actor that Watteau has represented. Hence a suggestion, perhaps for a moment, of incongruity between the grotesquely costumed, foolish-looking figure and the artless seriousness of the mobile face. But to Watteau it was another enigma of life, of the iridescent illusion upon the surface of dire reality: this comedy that hides under light laughter the pain of things. Such was the mission of the artist: to veil the bitterness of life with the mirage of art's creation. It is as a brother artist that Watteau conceived *Gilles*.

Poignant seriousness is, then, the measure of Watteau's superiority to his age and to his successors in the school of *Fêtes Galantes*. They were imitators of his motives and methods, with none of his aloofness; enamored of the life they depicted and dabbling in its shallowness.

For profligacy reigned at Court. Louis, when he arrived at manhood, having an easy and diffident nature, drifted with the current that surrounded him. His political advisers married him to Maria Leczinski, the daughter of Stanislaus, ex-king of Poland, and provided him with mistresses. The flattery of courtiers styled

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him the “first gentleman of France,” and he was satisfied with the dignity. The most famous of his mistresses, Madame de Pompadour, was the actual ruler of France for nearly twenty years, from 1745 until her death in 1764. From her apartments in the *Grand Trianon*, or the State Rooms of Versailles, she conducted wars, issued decrees and transacted the affairs of government, while Louis frittered away his time in his infamous seraglio of the *Parc-au-Cerfs*. Relieved of La Pompadour, he sank to the degradation of the Du Barry. It was into the circle tainted with her presence that the young, lovely and virtuous Marie Antoinette was received, as the bride of the Dauphin. The end of the royal shame arrived on May 10, 1774, when Louis, forsaken by all except his three daughters, Mesdames Adelaide, Henriette and Sophie, died of what was said to be smallpox.

During this shameless reign the world-power of France, built up by the Grand Monarch had sunk to national impotence. Her possessions abroad, won by her captains of war and enterprise in the East Indies and Canada, were wrested from her by the English and, as a last humiliation, she stood by helpless or too indifferent to protest while Russia effected the partition of Poland. Within her own borders the national spirit seemed to be extinct. Royalty was debauched, while the Church and Aristocracy were grasping for power and repudiating their responsibilities; institutions of privilege battering on the vitals of the country. The commercial classes were sucked by the leeches of taxation and the

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horde of usurers, bred from the exhaustion of society, while the agricultural population, the natural backbone of every country and of France in particular, was brutalized and beggared.

It was on this national rottenness that Rococo art, the most sprightly flowering of the Gallic spirit, flourished. The fact seems food for cynicism; an illustration of the esthete's trite contention that art has nothing to do with morals and of the philistine's scornful retort that the fairest periods of art are associated with the foulest conditions of national life. Incidentally the esthete and the philistine alike are partial in their choice of examples and superficial in their reasoning. Both point to such periods as the fifteenth century in Florence, the sixteenth in Venice and the eighteenth in France. They ignore the seventeenth in Holland, when a new art was fostered side by side with the growth of a new nationalism, and the fiber of both was moral. Not in the sense of didactic morality, but in that vigor and stanchness of pride and purpose which represent the highest coefficient of moral character.

But at the time the Dutch were freeing themselves from political and religious absolutism, the Grand Monarch had been forging the clamps of autocracy upon an exhausted feudalism. His grip removed, autocracy and feudalism declined rapidly to decay and dissolution. The Rococo was the afterglow of The Sun King, and of such color and life as still lingered in the privileged aristocracy. That the latter was not entirely corrupt is proved by the frequent heroism of individuals of the old noblesse during the Days of Terror that were to fol-

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low. It was Aristocracy as an institution that had become moribund; cankered with licentiousness. But in its individual members it still retained something of beauty and worth, though enfeebled by the general atrophy. Its art was the dying, transient gleam that passed and ceased; whereas the dawning light of Holland, though interrupted in the eighteenth century, persisted to re-illumine the following century. While the intimate aristocratic art of the Rococo died with the death of privilege, the democratic art of Holland, the intimate product of burgher home life, has survived to extend its roots into modern art in every country. One was an art of life, the other of dissolution. But for that reason let us not overlook the beauty that the latter possessed, nor what it had of worth. It is instinct with that gaiety and grace of spirit that was to irradiate the chaos of the Revolution; and to enable France to burst forth again into a new life which once more should make her the intellectual and artistic leader of the nations.

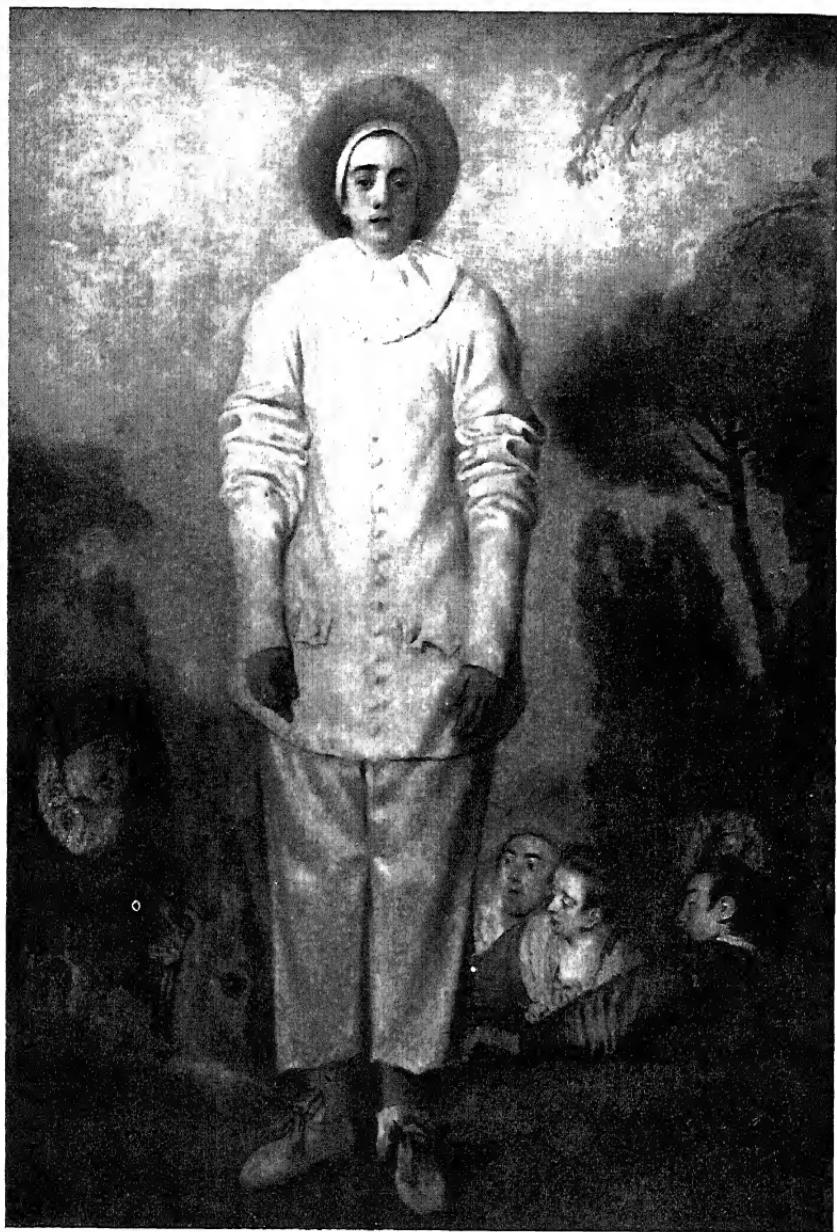
But justice is not done to the art of the Rococo even by these reflections unless one accepts at its own estimate the qualities of the Gallic spirit. The genius of the Teutonic is seriousness; of the Celtic, for all its humor, sadness. One can fathom both; but not the Gallic genius. That, to be realized, must be surprised in its flight in mid air. It does not engender on the ground; but, like the Queen-bee, seeks its nuptials in the whirl of ascent into the empyrean. Its environment is light and liberty of airy movement; its essence, love and life. The spirit most akin to it is the American, which has the

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aerial, sprightly qualities of a manhood that is still youth. But, as a nation, we are only old enough to be very serious about business and success therein; too young to be philosophers; too puritanic still to dare to be frank about life and love. Yet one of the oldest and most highly respected editors in America told me once that the whole secret of the art of novel-writing was to recognize that all human life has its origin and its meaning in the love of a man and a woman. For business purposes of successful writing we accept the principle of life being love and love being life, but wrap our acceptance of it in cloaks of pharisaical discretion. Accordingly, we sniff pruriently like a Tartuffe at what we term the frivolity and libidinage of the *Fêtes Galantes*.

Watteau we tolerate. Rightly we appreciate that his peculiar genius distilled the finest poetry from the Gallic spirit; but with his followers, Pater, Lancret, Lemoine, Boucher and Fragonard the case is different. The Gallic spirit has grown increasingly salacious. So prates our Puritanism. Meanwhile, let the American Podsnap scan the covers and pages of our own magazines, examine the book illustrations or lift his eyes to the catch-penny appeals of our posters and advertisements. Everywhere he will find the changes rung upon the theme of sex-attraction. But, this being "God's Country," Podsnap regards it as part of the providential scheme, whereas in France it is salacious. Or, possibly, Podsnap is in process of moral reformation; he sees no harm at home because none is meant. In time he may extend the same tolerance to the Gallic point of view as expressed in the Rococo.





GILLES

JEAN ANTOINE WATTEAU  
LOUVRE

## THE ROCOCO

Watteau's chief pupils were his fellow townsmen, Jean Baptiste Joseph Pater (1695–1736) and Nicolas Lancret (1590–1743). Both were conscious imitators of the master, whose anger was aroused when Lancret's *Bal du Bois* was taken for his own. It is possible that this picture is the one now known as *Fête in a Wood*, No. 448 of the Wallace Collection. The latter also contains a *Conversation Galante* and *Italian Comedy Scene*, which closely imitate the rich delicacy of Watteau's coloring and catch, too, a gleam of his poetic feeling. These early examples of Lancret, perhaps because their inspiration is not his own, represent his style at his best. He is more himself in the four *Seasons* of the Louvre, in which abstract poetic feeling is superseded by a lively interest in concrete touches of incident. In the scene of Autumn, for example, fashion is disporting itself at a picnic and one of the young men addresses a passing country-girl, who modestly lowers her eyes. Here one gets a glance at the affectations of society in favor of rural life and virtue. The poetry of Watteau has fluttered down to a pretty sentimental bathos: and, corresponding to the triviality of the motive, is the character of technique. It has become more mannered in composition, less supple in brushwork, more positive and less harmonious in color; qualities which grew into a hardness of style, as Lancret settled down to a more or less mechanical repetition of gallant subjects. Even more dry in method is Pater, though he again shows to better advantage in the Wallace Collection than in the Louvre. His *Fête in a Park*, *Conversation Galante* and *Fête Galante* of the former collection are still close to the

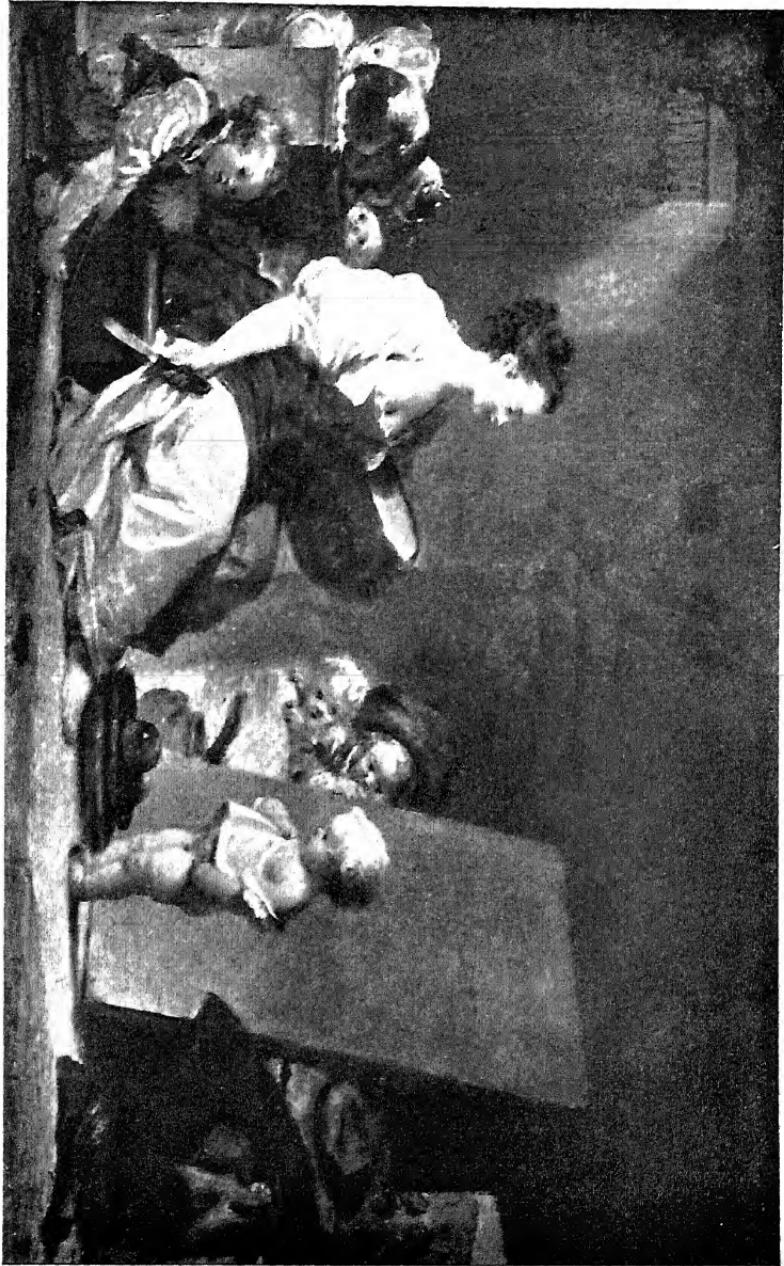
## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

Watteau model and catch a little of its mingling of piquancy and subtlety.

François Boucher (1704–1770) was the typical painter-decorator of the period. After studying with Lemoine, the Italianate decorator of the great ceiling in the Salon d' Hercule at Versailles, Boucher, though he missed the *Prix de Rome*, visited Italy on his own account in the company of Van Loo. Returning thence, he rapidly won Academic distinction and attracted the notice of La Pompadour, who advanced him at Court and consulted him on all questions of art. While he was epicurean in his tastes, his habit of work was indefatigable, involving ten hours a day of steady application. His output, therefore, was enormous, much being of necessity hastily conceived and executed. His reputation has suffered in consequence, as well as from the fact that, being decorative, it is seen at a disadvantage when disassociated from the space and the surroundings for which it was originally designed. It was in the patterning of surfaces that he excelled; as a draftsman and designer; but his color is often insipid, his brushwork entirely lacking in virtuosity; while flesh-parts, draperies, clouds, rocks and trees have a soft monotony of texture. He was correspondingly indifferent to the diverse expressions of human life. The human form was simply a model for decorative arrangements; now draped, now nude; here posing as a shepherdess, there as a suggestion of some mythological personage of Olympus. Thus he turned out an unconscionable quantity of artificial and mechanical figure-subjects, interesting mainly for the fluency and fecundity of their decorative inven-

JUAN LÓPEZ DE AGONIAD

LA MUERTE DE JUAN





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tion. Perhaps, after all, his greatest claim to recollection is that he was one of the masters of Fragonard.

Jean Honoré Fragonard (1732–1806) won the *Prix de Rome*, spent some time in Sicily, and returned to make a great success with a large historical canvas, *Le Grand Prêtre Cræsus se Sacrifice pour Sauver Callirhoe*. This, however, was his last essay in the historical-academic style. Henceforth he became identified with gallant and amorous subjects, distinguished by largeness and facility of execution as well as by brilliant virtuosity. More than any other painter of the period does he reveal the influence of Rubens, whose series of canvases in the Luxembourg, commemorating Marie de' Medici, was more or less the School of Painting for the eighteenth century, as it again became for the Romanticists in the early part of the nineteenth. Rubens himself represented the Italian influence interpreted by the Northern genius, and, as participants in the latter, the French now began to accept the lesson of Italy through the example of the Flemish master. The result was to train a succession of great painters, Watteau, Chardin, Fragonard and later Delacroix; artists who, however much they may differ in personal characteristics, are united in being masters of color and brushwork.

This mastery is the source of Fragonard's superiority to Boucher in decorative composition. Boucher emulated the inventive faculty of Rubens, but overlooked the latter's realization of form and movement, qualities in which Fragonard excelled. Thus the latter's *Cupids Sporting* and *Cupids Reposing*, which adorn the grand staircase in the Wallace Gallery, while they bear a

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cursory resemblance to Boucher's decorations, are immeasurably more vital. The flesh tones are rosy and limpid; the bodies, supple and plastic, are enveloped in a silvery transparent vapor; while the exquisite decorative ness is enhanced by the suggestion of life and the luxuriousness is tempered with virility. The same masculine grasp and handling invigorate the delicate fabric of the smaller panel pictures. Their subjects are trivial, skimming over the surface of passion with airy persiflage; but the trifles are immeshed in a web of virtuosity, as sure as it is dainty: the creation of a master, though he chose to work *in petto*.

Fragonard is the artist most characteristic of the period. Watteau spiritualized his vision of love and life; breathed a soul into gallantry; but Fragonard saw it as it had become—a graceful artifice. For, as the century proceeded, society grew satiated with license; passion became exhausted and was replaced, on the one hand, by sentimental yearnings after simpler and purer conditions and, on the other, by a cynical trifling with the affairs of the heart. Coquetry and gallantry became opposing pieces in the game of love-making, in which the attack and the defense were regulated partly by the rules of the game and partly by the nimble wit of the players. Artifice superseded feeling and was mirrored most delightfully in the finesse of Fragonard's art.

When we turn from imagined scenes, in which the spirit of the age is enshrined, to the portraits of the personages who lived and had their being in it, we meet

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as chief interpreter, Jean Marc Nattier (1685–1766). He is to the Rococo what Rigaud and Largillière were to the period of The Sun King. Pomp has yielded to elegance; character to fashion; stamina to grace of style; virility to virtuosity. If the pretensions of the Grand Siècle oppress us, the mincing prettiness and affectations of the eighteenth cloy. For it is essentially a woman's age in the worst sense; that manhood has capitulated to femininity, and that the latter exercises its domination through the most obvious and trivial qualities of sex attraction. The Pompadour wields a kind of power, yet it is exerted to deprave and to pull down; *après nous le déluge*. But power is for the most part in abeyance. The age has succumbed to silken fetters. Passion is exhausted, life has become a shallow comedy. The scene may be set in the open, but the air is laden with attar of roses and the powder of complexions and hair. The lumber-room of mythology as well as the farmyard has been drawn upon for properties; and the stage manager appears as a dancing and deportment master. The puppet-players, with set smiles and gestures *à la mode*, attitudinize and languish; miracles of dainty artifice, as seductive as the porcelain *bric-à-brac* of Sèvres. But, for all its superficiality and insipidity, this playing with life had its charm; and it was Nattier's gift to render it with a grace and fluency of style that preserve its flavor.

While Nattier is well represented in the Louvre, it is in Versailles, in the gallery devoted to his portraits, that he can be studied to best advantage. Here are the portraits of Queen Marie Leczinsky and her daughters,

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Mesdames Elizabeth, Adelaide, Henriette, Sophie and Louise. Some of them are what the French call *portraits d'apparat*; pictures of state display, with voluminous rich draperies, and the paraphernalia of hangings and columns; representing fine ladies rather than *grandes dames* and in a rhetorical style, more characterized by volubility than impressiveness. They are, however, admirably decorative; for Nattier shared the genius of design which distinguished the age and was a thoroughly accomplished, if superficial, painter and colorist. He excelled particularly in his effective handling of large surfaces of unbroken color, his favorite hues being blue and red; captivating in the purity, choiceness and nuance of their tones. That all the faces seem to belong to one family and are rather insipid in expression, is, perhaps, less his fault than a result of the modishness of the time and the stereotyped method of dressing the hair and making up the face. Nor is he responsible for the vogue that impelled ladies to pose as beings from Olympus or as nymphs, condescending to assist the processes of nature. That these fads of society did not escape the ridicule of contemporaries appears in a quotation from the satirical journal, *Mercure*. "Our ladies are represented," it says, "almost indecently naked, their only garment a tunic, which leaves throat, arms and legs uncovered. This garb, which is in reality none, is eked out by a piece of silk, wrapped about them in such a way as to serve no useful purpose, though it must be cumbersome to wear for it contains many yards of fine stuff. Some of these ladies are crowned with ears of wheat or other

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rustic adornment, most appropriately fastened with strings of pearls. Their common amusement, it appears, is to lean upon earthenware pots, filled with water, which they are invariably tipping over so as to water the gardens at their feet. This leads us to believe that they are fond of horticulture; a supposition confirmed by the fact that they are always represented in the open country. Another of the favorite recreations seems to be the raising of birds, even of those kinds most difficult to tame, such as eagles, which we frequently observe them trying to nourish with white wine out of golden goblets. They seem, however, to be most thoroughly successful in the breeding of turtle doves, for these gentle birds flutter about some of them, especially those of more melancholy humors, in great numbers."

Nattier's vogue, as the magician who could be "true to life" and yet make all his sitters beautiful, was imitated at a distance by the other portrait painters of the period. Chief among these were Jean Baptiste Van Loo (1684–1745) and his three sons, Charles André, called Carle, (1705–1765); Louis Michel (1707–1771) and Charles André Philippe (1718 to about 1785). Of the family Carle was the most skilful painter. On one occasion he represented with a good deal of spirit the halt of a party of hunters for luncheon (889, Louvre). The gentlemen's costumes are point device and the ladies are fresh from the ceremonies of the toilette; the whole scene is amazingly artificial and impossible from any sportsman's point of view; but possibly for that reason thoroughly characteristic of the age.

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The picture is an interesting record of manners and so are Carle Van Loo's portraits. But the faces, while no less conventionally treated than Nattier's, are without the latter's *esprit*, while the rendering of the costumes is correspondingly uninspired. In fact, beside his contemporaries, Nattier is the magician that he claimed to be. He is alone among the portrait painters in oils who catches the glamour of society's elegant routine. In this his only rivals are the artists in the newly invented medium of pastel.

. . . . .

Side by side with the painters of fashionable portraits and of the *Fêtes Galantes* were two who depicted subjects drawn from the bourgeois and humbler classes; Jean Baptiste Simeon Chardin (1699–1799) and Jean Baptiste Greuze (1725–1805). The former, though he secured little notice from his contemporaries, outside the ranks of the artists and one or two critics, is to-day held in high esteem as an original artist and accomplished colorist; while the latter, after enjoying an exceptional popularity, suffered during the Revolution an eclipse from which he has never really emerged. For Greuze's popularity declined with the passing of the conditions which inspired it.

His pictures, indeed, chiefly interest the modern student for the light they cast upon the state of mind of the society of his time. In 1755 Greuze astonished and delighted society with his Salon picture, *The Village Bride*. Five years later *A Father Reading the Bible to his Children* created another sensation. They were followed by *A Father's Curse* and *The Son Chastened*





PRINCESSE DE CONDÉ AS DIANA

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

JEAN MARC NATTIER

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and others of like import. Greuze, in fact, established the vogue of the sentimental-moral picture, at the same time that Jean Jacques Rousseau was charming the sensibilities of society with *La Nouvelle Héloïse*; and Diderot in his criticisms contended that “to render virtue amiable and vice odious was the proper aim of art.” Moreover, Greuze drew the models for his story-telling subjects from that third estate, which Rousseau declared to be the only surviving repository of virtue. The groups were theatrically arranged, the actors playing their several parts to the top of their bent, so that the compositions represent a tangle of excessive gestures. One of them, representing a mother surrounded by her offspring, was wittily satirized as a “fricassee of children.” The very intensity of the emotions depicted served to stimulate the jaded sensibilities of society, while their moral and sentimental tendency was a feature of the contemporary movement, partly sincere, partly an elegant fad, which advocated the resort to simpler and sweeter conditions of living.

Greuze’s popularity was enhanced by his single-figure subjects of young girls, in various phases of tearful and languishing emotion. They are of that fascinating age, when childhood is ripening into first womanhood and innocence is bubbling with wistfulness and fluttered with faint shadows of awakened sensibility. With caressing tenderness the artist’s brush lingers over the soft hair and the ringlet that has strayed from its ribbon; the soft down that grows above the forehead; the full and melting eyes, on the lashes of which a tear-drop often lingers; the curving nostrils, the kiss-

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inviting lips, the rounded cheeks and neck and the firm small bosom, peeping from chemise or drapery. Adorable simplicity! Innocence, most inviting! For these subjects, with all their affectation of modesty, are more symptomatic of moral decadence than any other pictures of the period. Whether you interpret them as appealing to a sentimentality that needs the stimulus of exaggerated loveliness, or to an appetite that can be stimulated only by an invitation veiled with innocence, they equally are products of an exhausted moral sense. Nor is there any escape from the consciousness of their artificiality and artistic trickery. The motive palls by repetition; the few devices, learned from Rubens, are concentrated upon the points that will gain the readiest acceptance, while the backgrounds, draperies and shadows are treated perfunctorily and the color is heavy and uninspired. The claims of art, indeed, have been sacrificed to a tickling of the popular taste.

It is particularly in this respect that Chardin proves himself superior to his successful contemporary. The motive of his work is sincerely and unequivocally artistic and his technique correspondingly sound. In 1728 Chardin showed at one of the open-air exhibitions in the Place Dauphin some twelve pictures, among which was *The Ray Fish*, now in the Louvre. For a time he confined himself to subjects of still-life, until, as the story goes, he was stung by the remark of a portrait painter: "You seem to think that a portrait is as easy to paint as a sausage." The suggestion is that this was the reason Chardin turned to the painting of figures; and produced those genre pictures of bourgeois life

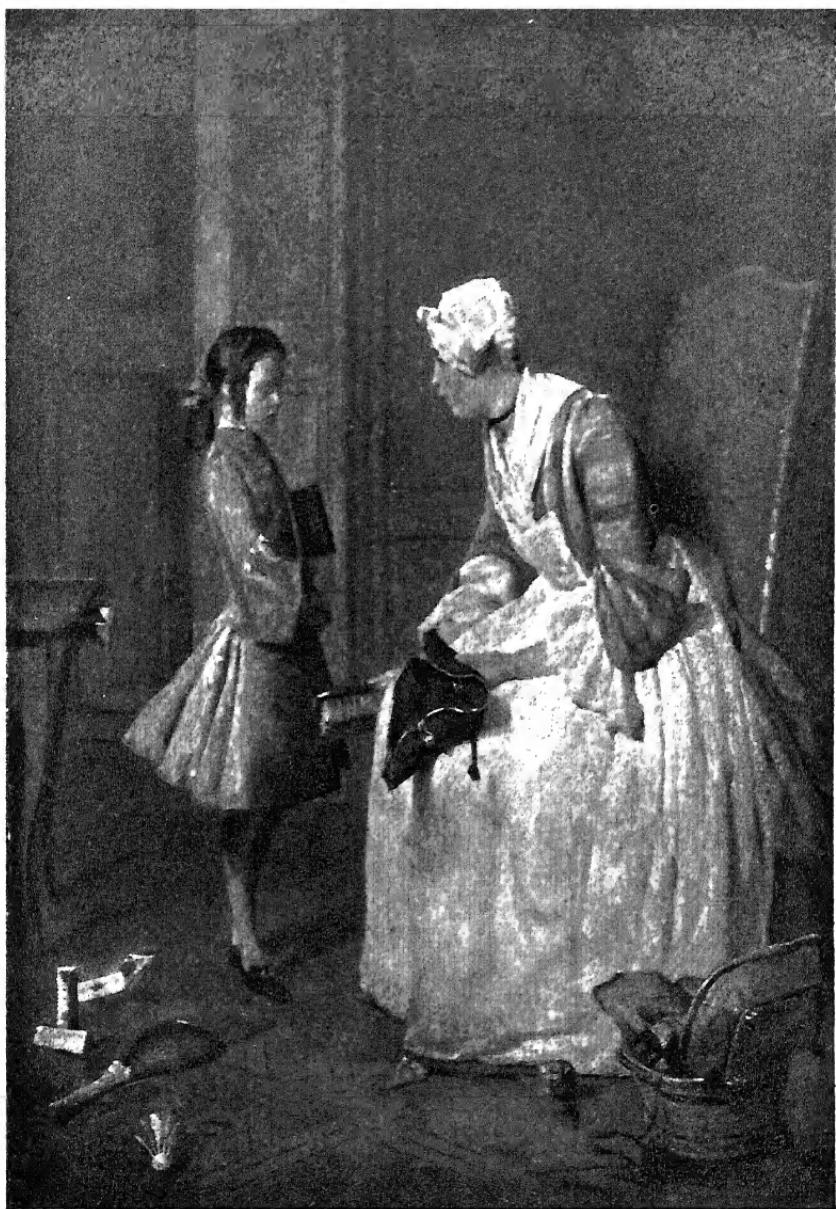
## THE ROCOCO

which rival the beauty of Vermeer's, but are thoroughly French in feeling and original in method. "For his manner of painting," as one of his contemporaries remarked, "is singular. He places his colors alongside of one another almost without mixing them, so that his work looks like mosaic or patchwork or like that hand-made tapestry called *point-carré*." Chardin, in fact, had devoted much study to the relation of colors and their effects upon one another, being in this respect far in advance of his day. "He is the painter," wrote Diderot, "who understands the harmony of colors and reflections. O Chardin, it is not white, red or black that you grind to powder on your palette; it is the very substance of the objects themselves. It is the air and light that you take on the point of your brush and fix upon the canvas. At times your painting is like a vapor breathed upon the canvas and again it resembles a light foam which has been thrown upon it. Go close to it; everything is confused and disappears; draw off, and all is reproduced, recreated. It is said that Greuze, entering the salon and seeing one of Chardin's pictures, looked at it and passed on, sighing. This brief praise is more eloquent than mine." Diderot's appreciation of Chardin has been confirmed by posterity, as also, to some extent his later attitude toward Greuze: "I no longer care for Greuze."

In an age, abounding in artificiality and lack of poise, Chardin displayed the distinctively French gifts of discretion, moderation, sobriety, harmony, and *esprit*. His art represents that soundness and sanity in the French character and life which inured, notwithstanding

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the frippery and meretricious sentiment and decadence of society at large; which beneath the shallow currents of thought and conduct represented what is constant in the race and was to rise to the surface and survive after the upheavals of the Revolution.



MOTHER AND SON

LIECHTENSTEIN GALLERY, VIENNA

JEAN BAPTISTE CHARDIN



## CHAPTER VII

### REVOLUTION

**I**N 1785, about midway between the accession of Louis XVI in 1774 and his execution in 1793, Jacques Louis David exhibited at the Salon *The Oath of the Horatii*. The following year Marie Antoinette's toy village, *Le Hameau*, was finished in the Park of Versailles, and the Queen and her ladies of honor played the innocent rôle of dairy maids. While this fact is typical of the feebleness into which had sunk the old order, David's picture forms an epoch in the advance of the new. Indeed, from this time onward, during nearly a century, epochs become symptomatic of the political life of France and the painters will be forced to contribute their evidences of the succession of shocks of change.

For hitherto, since the beginning of the French Renaissance, painting in France has been mainly an expression of the fashion and whims of society; its genesis and motive being aristocratic, representing the taste of royalty and the privileged classes. But now, at the close of the eighteenth century, the era of undisputed privilege is passing. France is about to throw off the yoke under which one third of the land was owned by the nobility, one third by the Church, and the remaining third bore the entire burden of taxation. The

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democratic ideal, cherished sporadically throughout the Middle Ages by the free-cities, asserted by the Hollanders in the seventeenth century and reasserted by the American Colonies in 1776, is to be acclaimed in France. Henceforth it is the collective needs and ideals of the community that, at least in theory, are to be considered; and it is to these that painting, in so far as it keeps pace with the expression of the national genius in other manifestations of art, will respond.

While the surface of French society had been iridescent with the film of color, reflecting the immorality, un-morality and more or less vacuous innocence of high life, the depths below for nearly a quarter of a century had been in ferment with ideas of sanity and reformation. True to its racial origin, the French mind, in its effort toward national betterment, had reverted to the Roman and thence to the Spartan ideal. Philosophers had reiterated the need of returning to the example of the Republic of Rome; the schools and colleges had urged it and the theses of schoolboys had rung the changes on the patriotism and the austere virtues of Roman citizens. In the disintegration that had come upon France the Gallic mind was instinctively directed toward the cohesion and organization of the Roman Republic. It was seeking in its Roman origin an ideal and the architec-tonics to realize it.

Meanwhile, the gathering energy had not as yet coalesced. It was still only fluent in the community and the ripple of its movement had as yet stirred only a little elegant froth upon the surface. For example, the beautiful and talented Madame Vigée Le Brun (1755–

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1842), whose sentimental and innocently refined portraits are characteristic of what is pathetically purest in the age, indulged her friends in the novelty of a supper *à la Grecque*. The guests, arrayed in their hostess's studio properties, reclined amid flowers, singing Gluck's chorus from *The God of Paphos* while the cook prepared the viands according to the Greek recipes, described in the Abbé Barthélémy's recent novel, "Voyage du Jeune Anacharsis." The repast must have been of Spartan frugality, since according to madame its total cost did not exceed fifteen francs. It was the fact that the sprightly mind of the gay young artist was playing upon the surface of the thought-movements of the time which gave the affair a social vogue. In contrast with this trifling was the part played almost immediately afterwards by David.

David was the favorite pupil of Joseph Marie Vien (1716–1809) who had already responded to the Classical trend of the time by declaring that painting should adopt "the noble style." With Vien, however, the "noble style" was a question purely of style; an affair of externals, clothing empty forms. It reflected the influence of the German critic, Winckelmann (1717–1768), the founder of scientific archeology and of the history of classic art. His "Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture" (1755) and "History of the Art of Antiquity" (1764) are the products of a rarely cultured mind and highly systematized thinking and of an imagination which, as if by instinct, penetrated the genius of the Classic. Nevertheless, the value of some of his conclusions is

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impaired by their unquestionable *parti-pris*; notably his doctrine that painting reaches its highest possibilities by imitating sculpture; that the “marble manner” and not the union of color and form and the accompaniments of tone and light and atmosphere, must be the painter’s aim. Meantime this doctrine was obtaining currency and affected David.

After two unsuccessful attempts David won the *Prix de Rome*. He had had some experience in painting decorations after the style of Boucher; but with his sojourn in Rome his manner underwent a complete change. Like Poussin, he was affected by the marble bas-reliefs. In following these models he was no doubt influenced by Winckelmann, but even more by the bias of his own taste. For David was already a Republican at heart. Vowed to austere ideals and lofty patriotism, his study gravitated naturally to the Roman art rather than to that of the Italians, and to the bas-reliefs as the examples of the pictorial use of sculpture. Their severity accorded with that of his Republican ideals; moreover, they often represented, as in the case of Trajan’s column, actual incidents of Roman triumph, and David was at heart a naturalist. He proved this in the early portrait of himself and in the later ones of other subjects, many of which are also in the Louvre. They are the work of a keen, clear-eyed student of the actual, who recorded what he saw with complete frankness as well as decisive force. This grasp of actuality, accompanied, as it was, with ardor of patriotism, explains David’s fitness to become the man of the hour.

The *Oath of the Horatii* was instantly found to

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visualize what had long been in the minds and on the tongues of so many of his countrymen. David was accepted forthwith as the artist of their ideals and the arbiter of public taste. This in a country like France which so inevitably translates its feeling and aspiration into forms of art meant that he was able to exert an incalculable influence in stimulating the one and pointing direction to the other. Terms of patriotism and frugal living, of devotion to country and civic duty, passed into the vernacular of the crowd; men and women accosted one another on the streets as citizens; the Roman fashion extended to clothes, furniture and other accessories of living; the Roman example was extolled in the market-place and became the text of orators in the First National Assembly. The latter had come into being and discovered its power within four years of the appearance of David's pictures; so rapidly did events move when once the fluent emotions, desires and aspirations had been precipitated into some degree of cohesion.

It has been seldom given to an individual artist to realize so fully the latent thought of his time and bring it forth into action; and it is this which makes David memorable and confers on this particular picture a phenomenal importance. For otherwise it is singularly jejune. Viewed solely as a picture, the group formed by the father and his three sons is stiff and frigid in its theatrical posturing, while the women at the side are sentimentally attitudinizing. But because of these very faults it was all the more expressive of the spirit preceding the Revolution, which found its voice in torrents of oratory and appeals to sentiment; in the passionate

## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

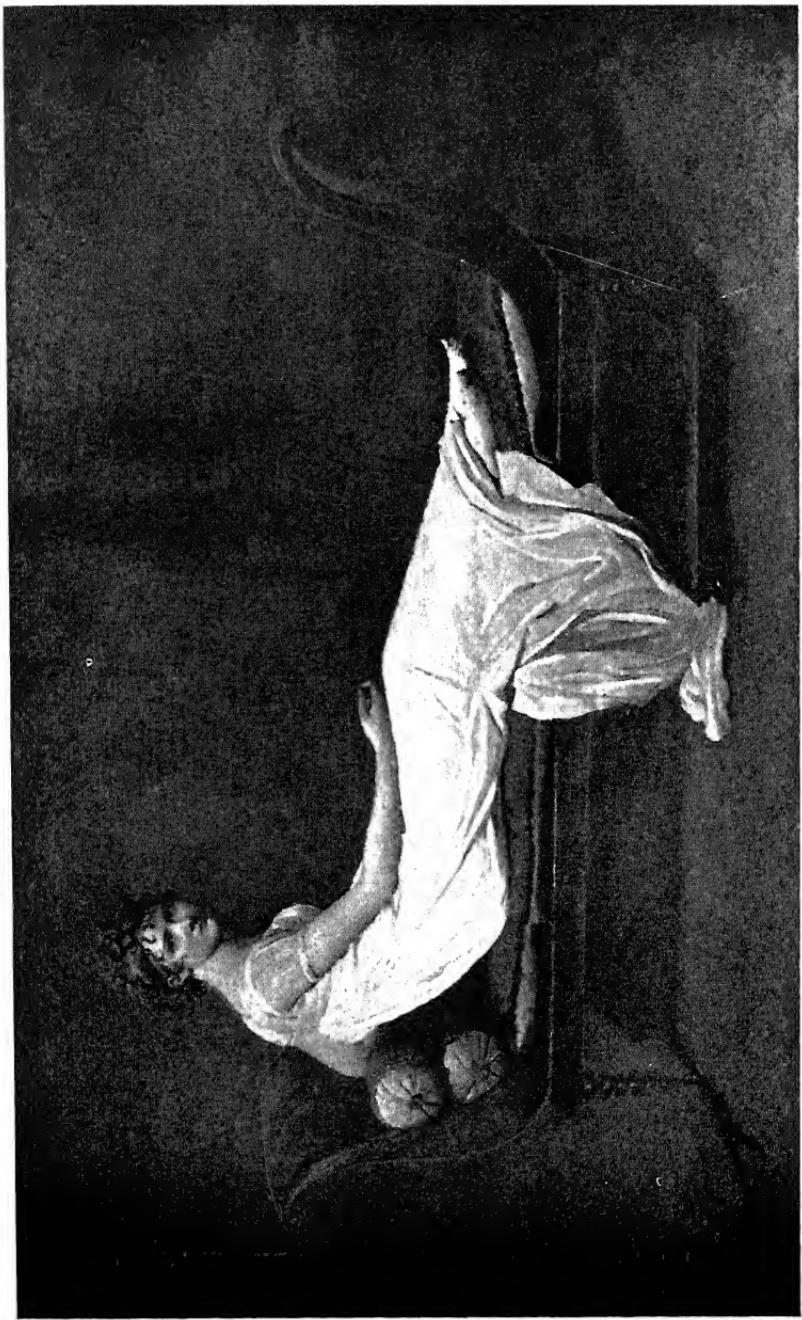
reasoning of Mirabeau; Danton's biting and fiery diatribes and the acrid invocations of Marat; Robespierre's uncompromising enunciations of principles and Saint-Just's tirades, saturated with sensibility.

It is a matter of history that the momentum of ideas, let loose in this torrent of words, submerged the old landmarks of thought and action in a welter of confusion out of which Napoleon was needed to wrest order. That he succeeded was due to his possessing in a marked degree the potent qualities of his race. He was an artist with a genius for architectonics. Gifted with a command of language, as distinguished by logical decision as by picturesqueness and wit, he appealed to the imagination of his countrymen and backed up his inspiration with organization. He replaced chaos with order and private ambition with patriotism; substituted for vague generalities of "Liberty, Fraternity and Equality," the concrete facts of a France united and once more paramount in the counsels of Europe; and satisfied the taste of his countrymen for hero-worship and faith in the Roman tradition by accepting the pomp and circumstance of an Emperor. Moreover, in this character he played the high Roman rôle of a constructor. While, toward other countries he acted the destroyer; at home he was a great builder; not of aqueducts, baths and amphitheaters, but of a nation and national character, under a codified system of law, modeled on that of the Roman Emperor, Justinian. With an eye for the capacity of every man, he showed special favor to David, as the head of official authority and organized system in the Fine Arts. For David is



JACQUES LOUIS DAVID

PORTAIT OF MADAME RÉCAMIER



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said to have had as many as four hundred pupils, with whom his relations were so cordial that he bound them heart and soul to the principles of classicalism. The result was a unifying and strengthening of the Academy of Painting and Sculpture, which has enabled it to maintain its prestige as the official bureau of the Fine Arts, not only for France, but through its schools for the rest of the civilized world. To this day the Academy and its École are the strongholds of tradition and authority and the dispensers of official patronage. Meanwhile, the active elements of the story of French painting during the nineteenth century represent revolt against the tenets of Academic classicism.

For it is a significant fact that the first fruits of the Revolution, so far as art is concerned, were the very opposite of what the political and social conditions would seem to have demanded. The Revolution had been directed against privilege and on behalf of the rights of man, that is to say, of individualism; whereas the result in the domain of art was collectivism in defense of privilege. The immediate and continuing effect of the upheaval was to release the individual and foster forceful personalities; but the classicalism of David was founded upon the impersonal. "The highest beauty is that which is proper neither to this person nor to that." It was based on form; that is to say upon externals and upon the latter without reference to color. It aimed at coördinated perfection, a norm of beauty, avoiding the irregularities and accidents of personality. It made, at its best, for style instead of character.

In establishing these ideals and a system to main-

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tain them the French were true to their racial genius for logic and organization. The only premise on which it is possible to base a system of instruction in the Fine Arts is that of form. Color is too much a matter of temperament and individual feeling to be reduced to a science and regulated by comprehensive methods. Nor can the subjective attitude be permitted toward form. That would be to substitute the exceptional for the norm. Form must be studied objectively in reference to a standard, outside oneself. What standard can be better than the generalized type evolved by the Greeks and Romans? And here again the French were true to the Roman tradition of their race. The Romans were not originators in the domain of the Fine Arts. They took their models from the Greeks, modified them to their own needs and so organized the reproduction of them, that the work could be effectively done by skilled craftsmen. Similarly the French system has diffused a skill of craftsmanship throughout the whole nation, the influence of which is not confined to the higher departments of literature, drama, painting, sculpture and architecture but extends into all the minor branches of intellectual and artistic production.

It has affected even the independent spirits who have broken away from the system and developed their personality in directions opposed to its principles. They, too, in their revolt, exhibit an instinctive regard for logic and a certain architectonic force and classical restraint which distinguish them as Frenchmen. Meanwhile the Academy has shown an aptitude to modify its classicalism and in a measure to accommodate its traditional

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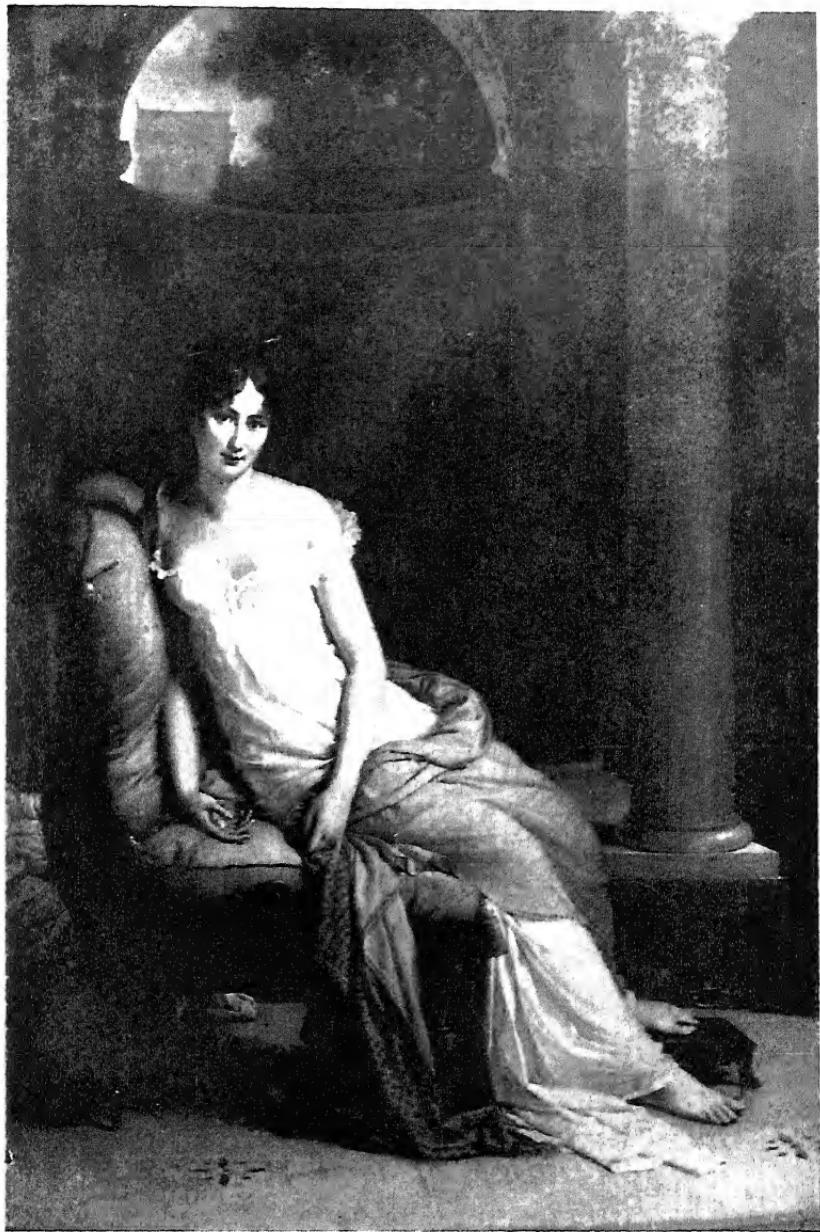
policy to outside suggestions. For around this Bastile of the arts, as its opponents have regarded it, or this beleaguered acropolis, as it has appeared to its stanch defenders, war has surged throughout the nineteenth century. With an ardor of conviction and fierceness of onslaught such as only Frenchmen can import into artistic conflicts, since they are artists by nature of their race and therefore must perforce be vitally in earnest, the Academy has waged battle successively with Romanticism, Naturalism, Realism and Impressionism.

Early in the century David abandoned the austerity of his Roman method for the superior grace and refinement of the Greek models. But his designs for furniture and costumes in the so-called Empire style, his *Rape of the Sabine Women* and *Portrait of Madame Récamier* (p. 97) are alike affected by a cold and formal precision. They have nothing in them of Gallic *esprit* or of the ardor that was fermenting in the new France. Madame Récamier, who was as conscious of her sway over male hearts as of being the intellectual leader of a salon, turned to Baron François Pascal Gérard (1770–1837) who, though a pupil of David, proved more gracious than his master toward his fair sitter's particular charms of femininity. It is, in fact, through his portraits that Gérard's reputation has survived; for his historical subjects were stagey and his Greek pictures insipid. The finest exponent of this Greek reaction was Pierre Prud'hon (1758–1823).

Prud'hon, beside being a student of Greek sculpture and drawing some of his subjects from Greek myth-

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ology, spent some time in Italy where he felt especially the influence of Da Vinci, Correggio and Canova. But it was the Gallic in him which determined his particular style. For in it lives again the spirit of the Rococo; the dainty grace of Watteau, tinged with poetic melancholy, only clothed in classic draperies; the allurement of Boucher, but impregnated with the seriousness of passion. For Prud'hon's life was a sad one, embarrassed until toward its close with poverty, and embittered by an unfortunate early marriage. Yet the breath of most of his pictures is that of eternal youth. Only an imagination still fresh with the ecstasy of youth could have conceived the exquisite figure of the maiden in the *Rape of Psyche*. Like his other masterpieces, *Justice and Vengeance Pursuing Crime*, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Swinging Zephyr*, it was painted during his attachment to Constance Mayer, who occupied a studio adjoining his in the Sorbonne. The allegorical subject, *Justice*, won the attention of Napoleon who commissioned the artist to execute the *Portrait of the Empress Josephine*; now in the Louvre, where it may be compared, to its manifest advantage, with the portraits alluded to above, by David and Gérard. After the death of Constance by her own hand Prud'hon, broken utterly in spirit, survived but two years, during which he painted his only religious subjects: *The Assumption of the Virgin* and the *Crucifixion*. These, like all his pictures, have been blackened by time. He also finished *The Unfortunate Family* which had been begun by Constance Mayer. He is buried beside his lady of love and sorrow in the cemetery of Père-Lachaise.



PORTRAIT OF MADAME RÉCAMIER

FRANÇOIS PASCAL GÉRARD  
LOUVRE



## REVOLUTION

Prud'hon, and, in a minor degree, Gérard and Anne Louis Girodet (1767–1824), represent the first dawning light of the hot day of Romanticism which was soon to kindle the ardor of the young generation. Before considering it we may delay for a moment and consider its great opponent, Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780–1867).

When the struggle began Ingres had already reached middle age. But he was of the kind who are born old and make up for the lack of imagination and youthful freshness by indomitable patience and perseverance. He was David's most distinguished pupil, though he incurred the master's ire by mollifying the strictness of classicalism with a mingling of the Italian, particularly of Raphael. Hence, at first, his work was rejected at the Salon. But he clung to his "heresy": "I count upon my old age," he said; "it will avenge me." And it did most amply, for Ingres became the acknowledged champion of the Academic. To his students he enforced the doctrine, "form is everything, color is nothing"; and when he guided them around the Luxembourg and they reached the Rubens Gallery, he would say, "*Saluez, messieurs, mais ne regardez pas.*" The caliber of his mind was small, but its grasp of the science of drawing and composition so elaborated by persistent effort that, however cold one may feel toward his work in general, certain examples of it arouse enthusiasm. These are scarcely to be found among his costume subjects or religious pictures; but, on the one hand, among the classical subjects and, on the other, among his portraits. His *Oedipus and the Sphinx*, notwithstanding the un-

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pleasant color, exercises a strange fascination, due apparently to its subtle blend of the concrete and the abstract. The figure of the youth, as he interrogates the oracle, has all the charm of young manhood in the pliant vigor of the limbs, yet the pallor of the flesh which is not that of life imparts an abstraction to the form that removes it into an aloofness from human suggestion. More human is the girl's nude figure in *The Source*; as she stands fronting us with raised arms, supporting a pitcher on her shoulder. And the pose throughout is one of natural grace. Yet the expression of the whole is abstract; it is the blossoming loveliness of girlhood that is rendered, pure of all reference to the personal. The secret of the spell that it exerts is that the lure of life has been translated into lines of Academic perfection; and that color, which is life, plays no part in the conception or expression. One may discover the truth of this by comparing the *Odalesque Bathing* with Manet's *Olympia*, which are now hanging in the same gallery in the Louvre. The Ingres again allures by its beauty of line and mass, until one turns to the Manet, which, though you may not care for the character of the subject, excels the other in distinction by reason of the living quality of its color scheme. The woman of Manet's picture is weedy and anemic, while the Odalesque is amply and wholesomely formed; so that the expression of life in the former is less a matter of personality than of the artist's vision and use of color.

Among the portraits by Ingres in the Louvre the finest is that of *Madame Rivière* (p. 109), which

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again fascinates by the exquisite elaboration of its lineal composition. Nor is it destitute of color charm; the dress cream; the Indian shawl, embroidered in dull red and green; the cushions blue; a carefully organized scheme of color pattern. On the other hand, the well-known *Portrait of M. Bertin*, editor of *Le Journal des Débats*, because of the inertness of its flesh-color, shows to better advantage in black and white reproduction than in the original. For there it counts purely as form, so that nothing impairs the stolid force of character expressed in this very representative personage of the bourgeois era.

The merit of these and other portraits by Ingres has tended to divert attention from his excellence in other subjects, and it is only beginning to be realized that Ingres is a great master of the French School. For the force outside the Academy which he combated was born of the needs and conditions of the time and it submerged his influence and the memory of him in its overwhelming torrent. Meanwhile, in these later days a reaction has set in, with the result that the reputation of Ingres is coming back into its own.

The whole matter resolves itself around the eternal question of the relation of art to life. Ingres upheld the superiority of art to life to an extent that almost implied independence of the one from the other. To-day we are discovering that painting has reached the opposite extreme: that in its rendering of life it has well-nigh achieved its separation from art. Hence, pending some modern compromise between art and life, between the claims of the abstract and the concrete, interest has been

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revived in the Academic compromise, so masterfully achieved by Ingres.

Meanwhile, looking back, one sees that he was erecting a dam to stem the living current of his age. The water was brimming with life, swollen with passions; a torrent of human energy, let loose by the Revolution, following the direction of its own momentum, compelled to self-expression. For the time being at least, the cold, calculating, impersonal art of Ingres could not avail against this force of nature, represented in the outburst of personal, individualized energy. The conscious sense of life had been newly awakened with all the glory of its possibilities and the younger generation of artists was necessarily in revolt against Academic restrictions, as against all other official contrivances for shackling the liberty of the spirit. Inevitable, therefore, was the Revolution of the Men of 1830.

## CHAPTER VIII

### LES VAILLANTS DE DIX-HUIT-CENT-TRENTE

VERY usual mistake is made of applying the title, *The Men of 1830*, exclusively to the painters of the Barbizon group; apparently from the notion that this represents the date at which they settled in that village. But Rousseau did not visit the Forest of Fontainebleau until 1833, while it was at the Salon of 1831 that the men, afterwards so famous as a group, first attracted notice by their landscapes. The phrase, actually coined to designate the band of literary artists who under the leadership of Victor Hugo were hurling defiance at classicalism, refers to that memorable night, February 25, 1830, when Hugo's *Hernani* was produced for the first time, and the rival partisans of the Academy and Romanticism came to blows in the theater. Five months later occurred the July Revolution of 1830, which drove into exile Charles X. the last of the Bourbon kings. Thus the phrase had an additional significance of revolt and came to be applied broadly to all the fervent spirits in literature and painting who had fought the battle of individualism against the paralyzing restrictions of official dogmatism. They were, as Théophile Gautier styled them in one of his poems, *Les Vaillants de dix-huit-cent-trente*.

One of the phenomena of the French Revolution is

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that within the space of only twelve years, 1789-1802, the old institutions had fallen and society was already being reconstructed on a new basis. This is to be explained by the fact that preparations for the new were already in progress before the downfall of the old. Thus, in the case of Romanticism, the torch had been lighted by Jean Jacques Rousseau and was carried forward by Châteaubriand (1768-1848) and Madame de Staël (1776-1813). Châteaubriand's autobiographical novel, "René," published in 1802, reveals him akin to Werther and to Byron—a prey to *ennui* and bitter self-analysis. "My mind," he writes, "while made to believe in nothing, not even in myself; to despise all things, honors, misery, kings and peoples, is yet dominated by an instinct of reason which commands it to reverence whatever is beautiful, such as religion, justice, humanity, liberty and glory." Converted from infidelity by his mother, he wrote "The Genius of Christianity," "a prose-poem which by a series of picturesque and pathetic images awoke all the vague religious feeling that slumbered in the souls of men." He also embodied in several books the impressions derived from his extensive travels, which included a visit to America, 1791-1792. The descriptions of nature which form the background of all his writings are impregnated with subjective feeling. As M. Lébon says, "no writer has ever painted more faithfully or poetically the all-compelling, somber or gracious spell of the night, the solemnity of primeval forests and prairies, the misty skies of Germany, the sunlight of Italy, the loveliness of Greek mountains or the varied colors of Arab encampments." Moreover, in

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his "Genius of Christianity," Châteaubriand inculcated new artistic ideals; the abandonment of conventional, vexatious rules for liberty of spirit; the interpretation of the grandeur and the beauty of nature and the expression of real emotion in place of depicting drawing-room manners and mythological scenes. Under his influence writers turned for inspiration to Shakespeare, Scott, Schiller and Goethe, whose works began to be translated into French; and to the Bible, Gothic art, medievalism and history in general.

The influence of Madame de Staël complemented that of Châteaubriand. In her novel, "Corinne," published in the same year as the latter's "René," and in "Delphine" (1807) she also indulges in the personal note and proves herself to be sentimental and romantic. On the other hand her main characteristic is that of a thinker. In her "Literature considered in its relation to Social Institutions" she declared, "The object of literature is no longer to be, as in the eighteenth century, merely the art of writing; it is to be the art of thinking, and the standard of literary greatness will be found in the progress of civilization." She broke away from the old method of criticism which merely searched for beauties and defects, and substituted as a basis the examination of a work of art in relation to the circumstances of its time and the psychology of its author. In fact, to quote M. Lanson, "Madame de Staël furnished the Romantics with ideas, theories and a method of criticism: Châteaubriand gave them an ideal, desire and the means of enjoying them. The woman defined where the man realized."

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The most brilliant of the younger band who were more or less directly inspired by these two writers comprised Victor Hugo, Alfred de Vigny, Lamartine, Alfred de Musset, Saint-Beuve, Théophile Gautier, Béranger and the historians Thierry, Guizot and Michelet, who transformed the historical method by infusing into it life and color. For life in its infinite, colorful variety of experience and sensations, set against the color of surrounding nature and conditions, was the theme which variously occupied these diverse minds. As the doctrines of Romanticism were formulated by Victor Hugo in the preface to his drama, *Cromwell* (1827), it aimed to rejuvenate art by giving it a new dress and a new coloring, to represent human nature with its real passions and weaknesses, to seek a background for emotions in the world of nature and to give local and historical truth to the heroes of the drama.

Of this atmosphere so charged with revolt from classical tradition and with ideals of the future, it would have been strange if painters had escaped the influence. As a matter of fact early in the century they became participators of the general impulse. Even David yielded a little to it when he painted his masterpiece, *The Coronation of Napoleon in Notre-Dame*, now hanging in the Louvre. This canvas of superlative magnificence does more than extol the pride of the Emperor. It is no mere official emblazoning of an autocrat's glorification, as were the state canvases of the Grand Monarch. It represents also the exultation of a nation, glorying in its newly awakened life and the grandeur of its possibilities.





PORTRAIT OF  
MADAME RIVIÈRE

JEAN AUGUSTE DOMINIQUE INGRES  
LOUVRE<sup>1</sup>

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But the painter who directly marks the transition toward Romanticism is one of David's pupils, Baron Antoine Jean Gros (1771–1835). He accompanied the French army during the campaign in Italy, and attracted the notice of Napoleon, then General Bonaparte, who after he had become Emperor commissioned him to paint the large pictures in the Louvre, representing *Bonaparte on the Bridge at Arcola*, *Bonaparte visiting the Plague-stricken at Jaffa* and *Napoleon at Eylau*. In these Gros abandoned the bas-relief compositions of impersonal antique figures in heroic postures for personages of the day, individually characterized and grouped with reference to the actions of the drama in which they are engaged. The coloring is no longer that of tinted marble, but has qualities of esthetic appeal. In their expression of the emotions, aroused by the horror and glory of war, these pictures are a foretaste of the storm and stress of Romanticism. In their record of events actually witnessed or imagined as the result of visual experience they anticipate the Realistic motive, while their tribute to the Emperor sets the key for the Napoleonic legend which the imagination of Frenchmen was weaving around the national hero. The younger generation recognized in Gros an inspiration. He had, in fact, all the qualities of a leader save belief in his own convictions. He could never free himself from the trammels of David's authority. The old master remonstrated with him for painting these "worthless occasional pieces." "Posterity requires of you," urged David, "good pictures out of ancient history. 'Who,' she will cry, 'was better fitted to paint Themistocles?' Quick,

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my friend, turn to your Plutarch." Gros' faith in himself was shaken. Later after the death of Girodet, who with Pierre Narcisse Guérin (1744–1833) had succeeded to the leadership of David, he yielded to the entreaties of the Academicians that he should head their fight against the hot-brained foes of classicalism. Yet he recognized the anomaly of his position. "I have not only no authority as leader of a school," he said, "but, over and above that, I have to accuse myself of giving the first bad example of defection from real art." Gradually his own pictures became paralyzed by the dead hand of classicalism, until in 1835 appeared the wearisome rhodomontade of *Hercules Causing Diomedes to be Devoured by his own Horses*. It was ridiculed alike by artists and the critics. Gros was overcome with despair. What he knew to be his natural temperament he had sacrificed to what he supposed to be his duty. And in vain. The flood of Romanticism was now at full tide and his efforts to stem it had overwhelmed him in humiliation. He drowned himself in the Seine.

. . . . .

Meanwhile, the note sounded by Gros in his earlier days had been repeated in a triple blast by Théodore Géricault (1791–1824), who thus became the actual leader of the younger generation. Like Delacroix he served his apprenticeship in Guérin's studio. But he had no use for the master's tame and elegant classicalism. A sturdy son of Normandy, he had grown up near the sea, prone to seriousness and nourishing a passionate nature on the elemental force and movement of wave and sky. Expressions of these qualities he found at

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first in horses, encouraged thereto by a short experience in the studio of Horace Vernet (1789–1863), painter of battle scenes. In 1812 he sent to the Salon *An Officer of the Chasseur-Guards*, the portrait of a M. Dieudonné: the figure seen against a lofty sky, mounted on a rearing charger and brandishing a saber. It was followed two years later by *The Wounded Cuirassier*, who, grasping the bridle of his horse, is slowly dragging his body from the battlefield. The design and character of the former may have been suggested by the central figure of Napoleon in *The Battle of the Pyramids* by Gros; but the latter, in its direct and telling expression of pain and simple appeal to sympathetic emotion, had the shock of novelty, which acted upon the younger men like a call to arms. They gathered around this youth of twenty-one and looked up to him as a leader. Delacroix, his junior by some years, was among those who posed for his next picture, *The Raft of the Medusa*, which was shown in 1821. The survivors of the wreck have been floating aimlessly without food or water for twelve days; the original one hundred and fifty have been reduced to fifteen: they are in the last stages of exhaustion; one already a corpse; but a passing sail has been sighted, and a sailor and negro, more hardy than the rest, are waving their shirts to attract attention. To the cool and collected spectator of to-day the traces of classical artifice are still apparent in the pyramidal design of the composition and the reliance on nude figures. In the coloring of the latter he will note also a prevalence of brown. Yet, if we try to put ourselves into the position of the young artists of the period, thrilling with the enthusiasm

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of their modern life, conscious of passionate yearnings and yet cribbed, cabined and confined in the meshes of a frigid convention, devoted to nerveless expositions of the past, it is not difficult to realize the amazing revelation of this picture. In importance it represents Géricault's masterpiece, although *The Race for the Derby* is technically finer and involves a still further audacity of innovation. Shortly after his return from England, where he had painted this picture, Géricault was injured in the spine by a fall from his horse. He lingered for two years and then died at the age of thirty-three, before he had time to realize the full measure of his genius. His mantle fell upon Delacroix.

Ferdinand Victor Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863) was to Romanticism in painting what Victor Hugo was to its expression in literature: an undisputed leader, on whom the hatred of outraged Academicalism was concentrated. Yet he had nothing of Hugo's stoutness of physical fiber, being a man of feeble constitution and inclined, like Alfred de Musset, to sickliness of soul. Nor had he the shifting violence of Hugo's temperament. He possessed a clear and logical intellect that, on the one hand, compelled him to base his art on scientific study of the qualities of color and, on the other hand, could challenge his adversaries with pen as well as with the masterpieces of his brush. He made his appearance in the arena in 1822 with *Dante's Bark*. Like David's *Oath of the Horatii*, it is an epoch-making picture and has been justly called "the first characteristic painting of the new century."



MASSACRE OF CHIOS

LOUVRE

EUGÈNE DELACROIX



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Who does not recall the subject? Charon's bare back straining as he drives his crazy boat through the greenish blue water, churned into foam by the contortions of the damned to whom Heaven and Hell are alike closed; Dante, awe-struck, and tottering in his balance; Virgil, whose shade has passed beyond human emotion, poised and calm; the fires of Phlegethon smoldering in the distance. It is still pyramidal in composition, with recourse to the expedient of the nude; yet it passes far ahead of *The Raft of the Medusa* in physiognomical expression and in the imagination which has realized the varieties of individual torment. The distinction of this picture, however, rests chiefly on its use of color. Color once more has been restored to painting. It has become a medium of emotional expression and has asserted its supremacy over the strictly modeled outline of the school of draftsmanship and marbleized painting. Well might the veteran, David, exclaim, "*D'où vient-il? Je ne connais pas cette touche là.*" This youngster had taken a classical theme but had made it live to the modern imagination. More than that, he had joined hands with Watteau and the finest spirits of the eighteenth century in mental admiration of Rubens and the latter's adjustment to Northern art of the glories of Venetian painting. Through the example of Delacroix, who is said to have devoted the first half hour of each day to drawing from Rubens, the Flemish artist became again the fertilizer of French art.

But where there is really life there is always movement forward and Delacroix's next picture, the *Mas-*

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*sacre of Chios*, exhibited in 1824, passes beyond the Rubens influence in the fact that it commemorates the emotion of the artist's own time. To a nation, vibrating with the trumpet call of Liberty, the heroic struggle of the Greeks for freedom could not fail of a response. It had been fired also by the poetry and example of Lord Byron, one of the high priests in the hierarchy of the French Romanticists. That his death had occurred at Missalonghi in the April preceding the Salon of 1824 was a coincidence which must have added to the sensation aroused by Delacroix's picture.

But the latter represents also a technical advance beyond the *Dante's Bark*. Its composition has exchanged geometrical formality for an organized irregularity of grouping and the color scheme also is more highly organized, more subtle and splendid. Instead of the murk of color which is fittingly characteristic of the other subject, the human horror is displayed against a beautiful golden brown landscape and a blue sky, radiant with luminosity. Further, there is an orchestration of tone which reveals the imagination and mastery of the color-composer, the real colorist. Delacroix in this picture had already surpassed all previous French painters in emulating the splendors of Rubens.

It is interesting to note that in this picture he was stirred to emulation of Constable. Géricault had written from England, "It is here only that color and effect are understood and felt"; and at the Salon of 1824, still held in the Louvre, some of Constable's landscapes were shown. They made so powerful an

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impression on Delacroix that at the last moment, while his own picture hung in its place, he added some touches to enhance its brilliance and luminosity. Later he frequently gave expression in his writings to the inspiration which the early French Romantic movement owed to the English artist's example.

In 1825 Delacroix visited England, studying not only British painting but also the literature and drama; and gaining his first knowledge of "Faust" through an English opera. Three years later he published a cycle of illustrations to accompany a French translation of the poem and followed it up with a series of lithographs of Shakespearian subjects.

For, as Muther points out, while the word "Romantic" as first used in Germany was equivalent to "Roman," the German Romanticists being moved to enthusiasm for Roman-Catholicism and Roman Church painting, the term in France had an exactly opposite meaning. It implied a preference for the English and German spirit, as compared with the Greek and Roman, and an enthusiasm for the Anglo-Saxon and German poets, Shakespeare and Goethe, in whom, as contrasted with Racine's correctness, were to be found unrestrained genius and animated passion.

The *Bark* had scandalized the Academy: the *Mas-sacre* infuriated it. Gros called it the "massacre of painting": others prophesied that this "dramatic expression and composition marked by action" would wreck the "grand style" of painting. Even its beauty of color was held to belong to an inferior kind of art, since it involved the sacrifice of the contours of the

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figures and was based upon ugliness of form. Delacroix became, and continued to be throughout his life, the target on which was concentrated the envenomed arrows of Academic criticism. He was accused of painting with a drunken broom and, since his birth-place was Charenton, the site of a state lunatic asylum, was called "the runaway of Charenton." No painter was ever so loaded with gross abuse. He was supported by Théophile Gautier, Thiers, Victor Hugo, Saint-Beuve, Baudelaire, Bürger-Thoré, Gustave Planché and Paul Mantz; but even his supporters caused him some distress, for they styled him the Hugo of painting and thrust him into a position of radicalism that did violence to his own reverence for the art of the past. Nor did his own temperament permit him to rest silent under all this opprobrium and misrepresentation. Frail of physique, sick of soul, and during the latter part of his life a victim to complicated diseases, he was drawn into a conflict which kept his flaming imagination continually at fever heat. Yet his writings, contributed to the *Revue des Deux Mondes* are models of criticism, expressed in the fine classical style, characteristic of his admiration for Racine.

He contended for a comprehension of art not limited to the beautiful as the sole, supreme end; but admitting the claims of character and emotion. "This famous thing, the beautiful," he wrote, "must be—every one says so—the first aim of art. But if it be the only aim, what then are we to make of men like Rubens, Rembrandt and in general all the artistic natures of





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HONORÉ DAUMIER

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the North, who preferred other qualities belonging to their art? Is the sense of the beautiful that impression which is made on us by a picture by Velasquez, an etching by Rembrandt or a scene out of Shakespeare? Or again, is the beautiful revealed to us by contemplation of straight noses and correctly disposed draperies of Girodet, Gérard and other pupils of David. A satyr is beautiful, a faun is beautiful. The antique bust of Socrates is full of character notwithstanding its flattened nose, its swollen lips and small eyes. In Paul Veronese's *Marriage at Cana* I see men of various features and of every temperament and I find them to be living beings, full of passion. Are they beautiful? Perhaps. But in any case there is no recipe by means of which one can attain to what is called the ideally beautiful. Style depends absolutely and solely upon the free and original expression of each master's peculiar qualities. Whenever a painter sets himself to follow a conventional mode of expression, he will become affected and will lose his own peculiar impress. But when, on the contrary, he frankly abandons himself to the impulse of his own originality he will ever be, whether his name be Raphael, Michelangelo, Rubens or Rembrandt, securely master of his soul and of his art."

A turning-point in Delacroix's life, which proved to be an epoch in French art, came in 1832, when he accompanied an embassy to the Court of Morocco and returned home by way of Algiers and Spain. The imagination of the colorist bathed in the splendors of southern sunshine and broadened its vision by experi-

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ence of the colorful picturesqueness of Oriental life. He writes to a correspondent of the "sublime and fascinating life." "Think, my friend, what it means for a painter to see lying in the sunshine, wandering about the streets and offering shoes for sale, men who have the appearance of ancient consuls, of the revivified ghosts of Plato and Brutus, and who do not lack even that proud, discontented look which those lords of the earth must have had. They possess nothing but a blanket in which they walk, sleep and are buried, and yet they look as dignified as Cicero in his curule chair. How much truth, how much nobility in these figures! There is nothing more beautiful in the antique."

Here speaks the real lover of the antique, who recognizes the eternal verity of its spirit; as contrasted with the attitude of classicalism that would flatter it by imitation. The distinction has never been better expressed than by the third Earl of Shaftesbury in his forgotten work, "Characteristics of Man, Matters, Opinions and Times," published in 1711. He criticizes those who try to reproduce the form instead of the spirit of the Classic and says, "We should not imitate but emulate the Greeks, for we shall be most like the Greeks when most ourselves." This observation is applicable to Delacroix. He was always himself; yet even in his most turbulent pictures, such as *Horses Fighting in a Stable*, in his scenes of intense tragedy like the *Medea*, about to kill her children, where the antique drama thrills with modern emotion, one detects the Greek spirit of poise asserted. Their effect is not produced, as in Victor Hugo's dramas,

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by shocks of contrast, but by a subtlety of ensemble, which, to use a term of the modern French studios, is elaborately *organisé*. Delacroix, in fact, for all the fire and splendor of his torrential imagination, reveals the poise and tact of restraint which are distinctively characteristic of French art. It is the over-enthusiasm of his supporters and the virulence of his opponents which have fastened upon Delacroix the reputation of an anarch.

## CHAPTER IX

### LE JUSTE-MILIEU

FRENCH Romanticism both in literature and painting was no exception to the rule that Romanticism appears as a protest and is of brief duration. Gusty with passion and inflamed with a love of the unusual, the surprising and the tempestuous, and usually inspired by what seems to be the glamour of the past, it lacks the elements of continuity and advance. Long before Delacroix's death in 1863 the mantle which he had received from Géricault had outworn its usefulness and the fashion of the time-spirit. Even Victor Hugo was being regarded as the "Pater Bombasticus" of French literature. The Revolution of 1830, in a political sense, had been a triumph of the *bourgeoisie*, and the reign of Louis Philippe, the "bourgeois-king," had been a period of compromise, characterized by the worship of the "*juste-milieu*." This had been upset by the Revolution of 1848 and France had plunged into the meretricious splendor and extravagance of the Second Empire, an era of nabobs and financial adventurers and of crass philistinism.

Romanticism, which had begun as a Revolution, had passed into an evolution; its heat no longer central but diffused. In its original form it had been inspired by, and largely drew its subjects from, legends and

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poetry; not to illustrate but to interpret them through the separate art of painting. Now, however, the sources of inspiration were rather those of history and nature. Taking advantage, on the one hand, of the vogue created by the new school of historians, comprising Thiers, Guizot and Michelet, the successors of Romanticism were indulging their milder emotions in scenes of history. On the other hand, the inspiration of nature, which, as we have noted, the writings of Châteaubriand did so much to popularize, was being differently employed. It had attracted the early Romanticists to nature's grand, sublime and more phenomenal appearances; under the influence of Constable and the old Holland landscapists whom his example had lead the French artists to study, a new motive had been evolved: the poetical rendering of the "*paysage intime*." Corot, Rousseau, Dupré, Daubigny, Troyan, Diaz and Millet were representative of the spirit of 1830, in that they also revolted against the conventions of the Academy. They possessed, in their several ways, a measure of the Romantic spirit; but instead of painting subjects from poetry, which demand for a full appreciation of their import a knowledge of the original, they infused with the enchantment of poetic quality scenes of nature that need no literary background.

Thoroughly characteristic of the period of the "*juste-milieu*" was Paul Delaroche (1797-1856) who attempted the rôle of being all things to all men. He coquetted with the taste for historic-romantic pictures

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in such subjects as *The Assassination of the Duke of Guise*, *Oliver Cromwell Viewing the Body of Charles I*, *The Young Princes in the Tower*; and squared himself with the Academy by his *Hemicycle of the Arts* in the École des Beaux Arts. In all, one feels the influence of the model and the reliance upon the costume cupboard and property room. Industriously correct in costuming and drawing, the historical subjects never reach the depth of tragedy, but have a mild emotional propriety, calculated to interest without shocking. Correct also but absolutely null is the effect in the *Hemicycle* of the wise men of all times, brought together by the art of the *costumier*, and waiting in a classic anteroom for nothing whatever to happen.

Another, though a more skilful, trimmer was Thomas Couture (1815–1879) whose *Romans of the Decadence* won for him a sensational reputation which he was unable to maintain. But, seen to-day, this bacchanalian orgy of men and women, classically grouped around, over and under the tables, while it has some distinction of color, rings very hollow. It has neither classical dignity nor the love of sensuous abandon. No figure really lives its part; all are stage supers, whose attitudes and expressions have been systematically rehearsed.

Still other examples of men who, though out and out Academicians, took advantage of the historical vogue and of the growing importance of the nature-motive, were Alexandre Cabanel (1823–1889), William Adolphe Bouguereau (1825–1905) and Léon Gérôme (1824–1904). Cabanel was the best painter of the

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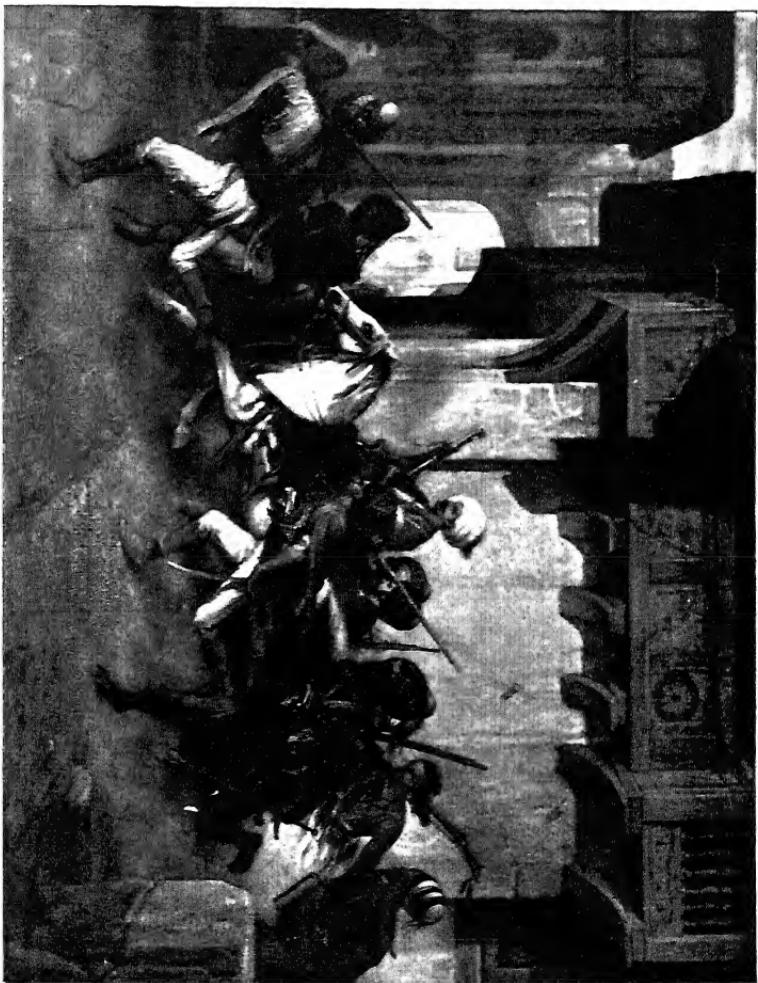
three; but, except in the case of his portraits, expended his skill on the tricking up of a model in various draperies and attitudes of seduction, posed to suggest this or that heroine of historical scandal. While these tickled one kind of taste of the newly rich, the innocent prettiness of Bouguereau's girls and children, rendered in an enlarged manner of china-painting, pleased another; while Gérôme indifferently played to all the foibles of those who see nothing in a picture but the subject. The three became painters-in-ordinary to rich Americans and enjoyed every honor that French officialdom bestows on its successful, as opposed to its great, painters.

For convenience we may here anticipate the vogue of the neatly painted costume picture, the small child of the historical canvas, fathered so profitably for himself by Jean Louis Ernest Meissonier (1815–1891). A skilful and untiring craftsman without an atom of imagination, he shared the enthusiasm of the crowd for microscopic detail and a furniture-polish finish, and charmed from the pockets of nabobs extravagantly fancy prices which it is pretty safe to say his works will never again fetch. The popularity of these little Rococo pictures was equaled by that of his cycle commemorating the Great Napoleon. He had begun by flattering the third Napoleon's vanity to emulate the military glory of his uncle, painting him surrounded by his staff, witnessing the *Battle of Solferino*. In 1870 Meissonier accompanied his patron to the front, but after the disaster of Sedan, returned to Paris and enlisted for its defense in the artists' corps. When peace

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was resumed he commenced his series on the Napoleonic theme. They represented the same method as his smaller pictures, multiplied to cover the larger surface, and were for the same reason equally popular. Meissonier could paint only what he saw in front of him at close range, and could not refrain from reproducing everything that he saw in it. His eye was a human camera, and the results are those of photography, when uncontrolled by selection and elimination on the part of the operator.

From this digression we may revert to our subject by way of another painter of the Napoleonic legend, Denis Auguste Marie Raffet (1804–1860), whose work reflects the ardor and imagination of Romanticism. He was a pupil of Gros and also of Nicolas Toussaint Charlet (1792–1845). The latter was indefatigable in presenting with pencil and brush the person of “the little corporal” and the types of veterans of the Grand Army. His drawings and pictures were for the most part clearly recorded facts of keen observation. But in at least one of his subjects Charlet displays imagination. Of his *Episode in the Retreat from Russia*, which appeared in the Salon of 1836, Alfred de Musset wrote that it was “not an episode but a complete poem” in which the artist had realized “the despair in the desert.” It was a similar quality of fathoming the reality of war, such as Gros had also exhibited, which characterizes the works of Raffet, in which he follows, step by step, as it were, the fortunes of Napoleon and the Grand Army, in its glories and its scarcely less glorious humiliation. The last of the cycle is *The Midnight Review*,



NIGHT PATROL AT SMYRNA  
ALEXANDRE DECAMPS

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART



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in which the ghost of Napoleon has summoned from eternity his spectral hosts, which surge about him in dashing waves of silence. It reveals Raffet's power of handling masses of troops, so as to realize the effect of their mass and its collective fire and force. His genius was, in fact, the very opposite of Meissonier's niggling with details which impair the impressiveness of the whole. Equally he excelled in sincerity the rapid-fire dexterity of Horace Vernet (1789–1863). The latter's *Mazepa*, popularized by lithographs, showed something of the Romantic spirit; but Vernet, the pupil of his father and accustomed to the brush from childhood, had an extraordinary facility, which outran his art and left him merely an exceedingly versatile practitioner. His series of battle canvases in Versailles show how thoroughly he had mastered the externals of the soldier's career, but also that he had missed its spirit. His pictures suggest little of the reality of war and seem rather like martial exhibitions in a hippodrome.

A strangely interesting bi-product of the Romantic period is Honoré Daumier (1808–1879). His pictures are comparatively few in number, one of the finest being *Le Wagon de Troisième Classe*, owned in America by Mr. Borden. The row of people, crowded on the seat of the bare coach, represents familiar types of the lower classes, characterized with an unerring grasp of physiognomical essentials and brushed in with a free stroke that glides over unessentials and fixes emphatically the salient features. Similar qualities distinguish the drawings for the comic papers, notably for

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*Charivari*, which form the bulk of Daumier's work. In these the brushwork is replaced by lines of extraordinary integrity, meaning and power. These periodic records of the human comedy during the reign of Louis Philippe, while they hit off the follies of the time, throb with an undertone of the tragedy of life. In his *Emotions Parisiennes* and *Bohémiens de Paris* he reveals the horrors of hunger and suffering as well as the impudence of vice; in his *Histoire Ancienne* he parodies the absurdities of classicalism, while *Le Ventre Legislatif* dealt such a blow at the smug hypocrisy and compromise of the bourgeois rule that it materially contributed to the Revolution of 1848. When Daubigny visited the Sistine Chapel and viewed the ceiling of Michelangelo, he is said to have exclaimed, "It looks as if it had been done by Daumier." There is an aptness in the suggestion, for, beneath the laugh, in Daumier's drawings lie trenchant force, a vital economy of means, magnificence of plastic realization and grim intensity of purpose. Within his province, Daumier was a master of the truly grand style, whose influence, as we shall note later, helped to mold the art of Jean François Millet.

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After Delacroix had set the example by his visit to Morocco, Egypt and the East became to the Romantics what Italy had been to the Classicists. Here in the actual facts of life and the presence of nature they could see the glow and color and stir of movement, which hitherto had fermented only in their imagination, assisted by the promptings of poetry and legend. None derived from the experience more inspiration, suited to

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his particular needs than Alexandre Decamps (1803–1860). For he was first and last a painter to the finger tips; to whom everything that possessed color and movement was sufficient for a subject. And such he found at every turn in the wonderland of the East. Among his earliest examples in this vein is the beautiful *Night Patrol at Smyrna* of the Metropolitan Museum. He is inadequately represented in the Louvre, and to study him in the variety of his Oriental and Biblical subjects and in his water-colors a visit must be paid to the Wallace Collection. One of the finest here is *The Watering Place*: a row of Arab horsemen watering their horses at a trough, beneath a high wall which catches the light. It comes, perhaps, nearest to justifying the reputation Decamps held among his contemporaries of being a painter of light; but at the same time shows that he was not one in the modern sense. For it is rather through the contrast of deep masses of shadow that he renders a suggestion of light, and the shadows have darkened. His effects, indeed, are obtained not so much by rendering nature as by device of art; which in these days, when art is so often sacrificed to nature, may tend rather to increase one's estimate of Decamps.

With less of the latter's color-sense and virtuosity of brushwork, Prosper Marilhat (1811–1847) rendered the East in a spirit of quiet poetry. Between the years 1833 and 1844 he was the only serious rival of Decamps in the Oriental genre. But after the latter date he disappears. Failure to be awarded the Cross of the Legion of Honor brought on a melancholy, resulting in insanity from which he died at the age of thirty-six.

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With Eugène Fromentin (1820–1876) the original fervor of the Oriental painter evaporates into elegant refinement. The *esprit gaulois* reasserts itself in the grace, distinction and nervous poise of these Oriental compositions, where the loveliness of the landscape is sprinkled with Arab chivalry, as dainty as groups of delicate and gaily-colored flowers.

. . . . .

Meanwhile, unattracted by the lure of the East, Paul Huet (1804–1869) and Georges Michel (1753–1843) found a vent for their emotional temperaments in painting the home landscape. Huet, though the younger man, may be mentioned first, since in his day he was recognized as a part of the Romantic movement. Something of the Byronic attitude toward nature possessed him; a passion for splendor of colored skies, for stormy movement of clouds and water, contrast and shocks of storms; and the struggle of humanity with the vicissitudes of nature. His earlier works are not free from the criticism of being theatrical in effect, while the simpler ones which followed found themselves in competition with the Barbizon landscape and suffered by comparison.

Michel, on the other hand, entirely unknown to his generation, has attained through the vogue of the Barbizon pictures a posthumous fame. The appearance of some of his landscapes at the International Exhibition of 1889, attracted attention to this solitary artist, whose genius had hitherto been overlooked save by a few connoisseurs. The meager facts of his life were unearthed: "that at twelve years old he had shirked school

## LE JUSTE MILIEU

to go drawing; at fifteen had run away with a laundress and was the father of five children at the age of twenty; that he had married again when he was sixty-five and worked hard until his eightieth year." It was recalled that after the Revolution he painted many landscapes in the classical style, but had certainly disappeared from the Salon since 1814. In later life he gained a livelihood by restoring pictures, and may in this way have been drawn to study the Dutch seventeenth century landscapes. At any rate they seem to have directed him to the painting of the simple landscape in its natural aspects. "The man who cannot find," he is reported to have said, "enough to paint during his whole life in a circuit of four miles is in reality no artist. Did the Dutch ever run from one place to another? And yet they are good painters, and not merely that, but the most powerful, bold and ideal artists." He found his own circuit in the plains of Montmartre. His pictures play upon the theme of level sweeps of land, interrupted by low, undulating hills; seamed with long winding roads, pricked here and there with a church or farmhouse, or occasionally thrusting a dark windmill against the wide expanse of sky. The earth, brown-soiled, its yellow herbage scantily varied with deep green, now basks beneath a whitish sky, now shivers in the gloom of a leaden-purple storm-cloud, fringed with rain, or under the shifty cloud-currents is streaked with light and shadow. Over all broods a spirit, large, aloof, elemental.

Michel is the link between the earlier Romanticists and the poetry of the *paysage intime*.

## CHAPTER X

### THE POETRY OF THE PAYSAGE INTIME

A SECOND time in the story of French painting Fontainebleau becomes the nucleus of a fresh departure. Three centuries earlier Francis I had invited thither Italian artists, thus giving royal indorsement to the inauguration of the French Renaissance. Now a group of artists, settling in Barbizon on the edge of the Forest, developed a new motive: the poetry of the *paysage intime*.

A great difference separates the two events. The earlier, an aristocratic movement, had been an infusion of French life and thought and art with the southern culture of Greece, Rome and Italy; a recovering of the birthright of the nation in one of the sources of its race and civilization; an assertion of the Mediterranean element in its mixed ancestry. The new movement is democratic, its origin not only northern but essentially French. It represents the northern independence and interest in the facts of nature, and expends its enthusiasm on the native landscape of the simple countryside. But it is also tinged with the Romanticism of its day, so that its exponents are not satisfied to render nature objectively. They bring feeling to interpret what they see and translate their own sensations into poems of nature's moods.

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The suggestion of the *paysage intime*, as Delacroix explains in his "Question sur le Beau," published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, in 1854, came from England. At the Salon of 1824, held in the Louvre, Constable and Bonington were represented, as well as Copley Fielding, Harding, Samuel Prout and Varley, while Constable continued to exhibit annually until 1828. In the Salon of 1831 appeared for the first time the young Frenchmen whose names are now immortalized. Rousseau made his first visit to Fontainebleau in 1833, when he was twenty-one years old. The following year he painted the *Côté de Granville*, which was awarded a medal of the third class. Thenceforth, for twelve years, his pictures were rejected from the Salon, notwithstanding the fight urged on his behalf by Bürger-Thoré, Gustave Planché and Théophile Gautier. It was not until the Revolution of 1848 had overturned the sway of bourgeois officialdom that the Salon was opened to him. Meanwhile Corot discovered Barbizon and Rousseau about 1835, when he was nearing his fortieth year, just as some eight years previously he had become acquainted at the Salon with the works of Constable and Bonington. Both experiences left their impression upon the slow process of his evolution out of the classicalism which he had derived from his teacher, Bertin. He was turned fifty before the result of these various influences were fully assimilated into the manner that is peculiarly his own.

These two, Corot and Rousseau, typify the elements which compose the poetry of the *paysage intime*. Rousseau, son of a small tailor, inured to poverty and

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born to sorrow "as the sparks fly up," was inspired by a love of nature that in its intensity amounted to worship, while his study of nature involved an exactitude that was almost mathematical and a rendering of it that vies with the plasticity of sculpture. Corot, on the other hand, whose parents were court modistes, was a stranger to want and vexation of spirit; one of those rare natures on whom the smile of childhood lingers to the end; an avatar of the Greek spirit that lurks in the spiritual alertness of the *esprit gaulois*. For Corot's temperament was classic in the true sense; trembling to the subtlest suggestion of nature, but also governed by a delicate sense of poise, harmony and rhythm.

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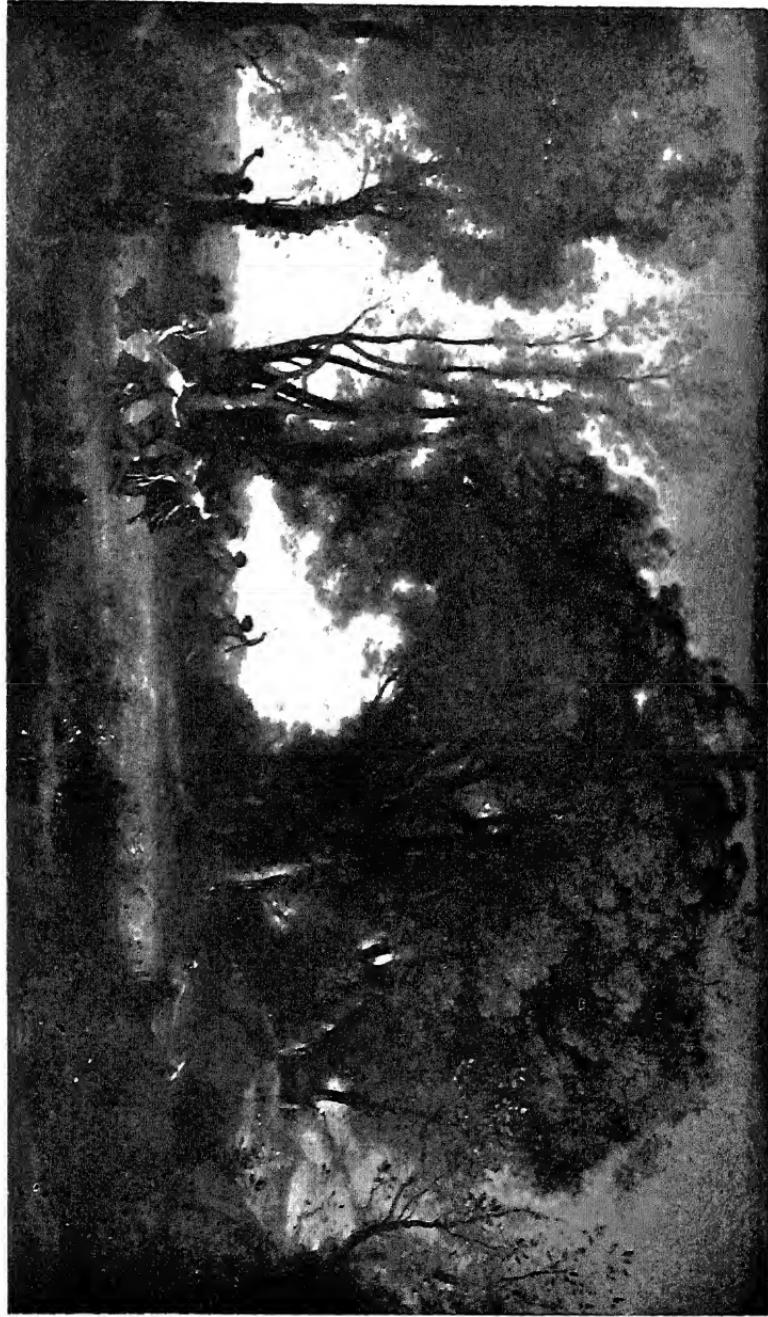
It is not unusual to describe Corot's artistic career as a gradual release from the bondage of classicalism into the liberty of nature. But rather it represents the slowly accomplished union of the two inspirations: that of Nature and the Classic. So far from his early affiliations with Bertin's classicalism being a deplorable deferring of his artistic salvation, it was a necessary and fruitful approach thereto; one that to such a temperament as Corot's was inevitable. It was through classicalism that he had to discover himself, and he did so by discovering how classicalism differed from the Classic. He had to sift the true from the false. Nor was it from Barbizon or Rousseau that he derived his love of nature. It is more than latent in his early landscapes and figure-subjects which owe their immediate origin to his Italian visits.

In fact, Corot's life was not chopped in half, as some

DANCE OF THE NARWHALS

JOANNE  
JAWORSKI

JEWEL RAVENSTINE CALLIGRAPHY





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writers would have us believe, by a sudden conversion to the "true faith" at the age of fifty; after which he sloughed off his classicalism and appeared as the re-generated and real Corot of our fancy. The truth is, that his life was an unbroken and consistent whole; a young man's love for an ideal, bodied in nature's form and spiritualized by the Classic soul; pursued through years of quietly ardent courtship, until his ideal was won and he dwelt with it in perfect amity.

The better way to measure Corot's personality and his place in French art is not to compare him with Rousseau, as is generally done, but rather with Poussin. For then one discovers that Corot is joined to the latter in a lineage, characteristically French, while it is through Constable to the Dutch, in direct line from Ruisdael, that Rousseau derived. Corot shared with Poussin both the northern love of nature and the reverence for the Classic. The earlier artist, however, still clung to the idea of nature as the scene of human emotions, uniting his mythological and Biblical figures with the landscape and composing nature and humanity into an arabesque, more distinguished by line and mass than by color. Corot, on the other hand, weds color with line in a unity which is at once more unreservedly a vision of nature and more convincingly impregnated with the human spirit. The fact is, that in both respects, Poussin, alongside of Corot, is a painter of landscape genre, while the latter artist embodies the spirit of nature as it appeals to the spirit of man. For while Poussin harmonized man and nature pictorially, Corot effects a spiritual harmony, based upon undertones of

## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

order, balance and rhythm, such as were imagined and visualized by Hellenic artists. It has been well said that Corot did not paint nature, but his love of it; and his love of it was saturated with the Classic spirit.

Meanwhile a bond of similarity between Poussin and Corot consists in their abstract attitude toward the landscape. Compared with this Rousseau's landscapes seem local, Constable's still more so. The latter's are filled with the charm of familiarity. He is like Daubigny in his gift of making one feel at home in the intimacy of the place. With Rousseau also the individuality of the scene is made familiar. One treads the spot with a feeling of being at home, although, it is true, one's imagination is drawn toward a wider significance, of which one is led to feel that the local is only a symbol. But, while Rousseau's intellect was fascinated with the facts around him and his spirit was that of a Prometheus, shackled in torment to the earth; Corot's is disengaged, more abstract. It soars lightly and songfully as the skylark, and, fluttering down, again, brings something of heaven to earth. His landscapes, in fact, are not halting places on the way to the universal, as Rousseau's are, but spots of earth, transfigured by something of the universal having been drawn down into them.

It may not be amiss to recall that in the interval since Poussin there had appeared the exquisitely French and spiritual art of Watteau. For there is more than a little analogy to Watteau in the poignant loveliness of Corot's landscape and in his peopling them with figures. The latter, whether nymphs of classic pedigree

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or peasant folk are not only impersonal but seem to be embodiments of the spirit of the scene; accidental notes in the harmony of universal music.

The admiration felt for Corot's landscapes has tended to obscure the importance of his work in subjects where the figure plays the chief rôle. In almost all it is the female figure; treated at first for the sake of its objective personality, then gradually employed as a symbol of the eternal feminine. As Rousseau pre-eminently represents the male force in this Pleiad of landscape-painters, so Corot is the unqualified embodiment of the female. His later figure-subjects are idyls of the grace and loveliness of spirituelle girlhood, instinct with the tender sprightliness of springtime and the subtle mystery of awakening day.

In his earlier pictures which comprised the results of his first visit to Italy, he was intent upon the plastic qualities of form and gesture; later, in his numerous pictures of Parisian types, it was the spirit of the subject at which he grasped, while in his final treatment of the figure, which followed his return from the second visit to Italy in 1843, he added the quality of tone. No less plastic, his figures have become more alive because they are enveloped in air; spherical forms in depth of atmosphere. By this time also they are more completely wedded to the spirit of the scene, or if you will, the latter is more inseparably incorporated in them, so that to reality is added elusiveness of spiritual suggestion. It is on this side of his art, which he pursued intermittently with landscape, that Corot may be compared with Millet. Their choice of subjects was very different, but

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both use the figure in relation to the landscape typically; Millet to symbolize the age-old routine of labor in the scheme of the universe; Corot, nature's pervasive spirit of harmony and recurring youth.

It is rather sentiment or convenience that links Corot with the "Barbizon School." He seldom visited the Forest, preferring Ville d'Avray and Paris. Nor was he as much in the habit of painting in the presence of nature as the others. His work in the open air was largely the storing of impressions, which he afterwards wrought into pictures in his Paris studio. For this reason and because of his Classic bias, Corot was scarcely accepted as a veritable nature-painter by Rousseau and his immediate circle. Nor was he one in the sense in which they understood the term. Possibly for that very reason his art has more of the universal quality and of inherent personal vitality. Certainly to-day he seems the most modern of the band.

. . . . .

In a brilliant chapter of his "Maître d' Autrefois" Eugène Fromentin shows how the Barbizon artists invaded and conquered the field of the seventeenth century Holland landscapists. And in this connection he pays the highest tribute to Théodore Rousseau. In doing so, however, he is disposed to overlook the influence of Constable. The English artist's *Hay Wain* was seen by Rousseau in 1833, and the latter's picture of the following year, *Côté de Granville*, now in the St. Petersburg Museum, shows, as Meier-Graefe observes, the influence unmistakably. Moreover, in the qualities which especially characterize the advance of Rousseau

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beyond the Hollanders: namely, greater naturalness of color, movement of the tree-forms in atmosphere, and the abandonment of little particularities of detail for a more sweeping and comprehensive synthesis, Constable had anticipated the discoveries and progress of the Barbizon artist by a generation. Nor in the matter of sentiment is the record otherwise. Making allowance for difference of temperament, Constable's art is as expressive of the poetry of nature, that is to say, of the artist's love for nature, as that of any of the Barbizon group.

But to recognize this is not to belittle Rousseau. It is only to view him from a different angle; to see his art through the more immediate prism of Constable than the farther one of Ruisdael from whom both are derived.

Meanwhile, if one penetrates beyond these sources of inspiration to the personality itself of Rousseau, it is to discover its essentially Gallic character. What preceded him in the art of Holland and of England becomes in Rousseau a distinctively French incarnation. We can assure ourselves of this fact both by the objective evidence of his pictures and by the psychology they embody.

It is French rural landscape, the appearance and spirit of it that Rousseau specifically interprets. If you are familiar with the French countryside and with that of Holland and of England and have come under the spell of their spirit, it is impossible not to feel that Rousseau is thoroughly French both in his record and interpretation. How shall one characterize the difference? Maybe, it is the snugness of England and the

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diminutive sweep of Holland that are contrasted with the wider sweep and more expansive intimacy of the French northern landscape.

And psychologically the Gallic strain in Rousseau's art is equally perceptible. It involves a logic of arrangement, more organized than Constable's, more subtle than Ruisdael's. They say that Rousseau, as a boy, was proficient in mathematics. It may be true, for midway in his career as an artist the scientific bent of his mind was developed at the expense of the artistic. He became as rigid a student of the objective facts of nature as any Ruskin could desire. Meanwhile, his art, taken as a whole, reveals that architectonic quality which is peculiarly French. He lays the solid foundations of the ground, roots in it the trees and rocks and builds up their structures, giving to the trees a living vigor as of a giant bracing his huge body and stretching the knotted muscles of his brawny limbs. And back of this stout and stable framework, richly sober and solid in color, he sets the sky, a contrast of evanescent movement, mysterious distance, light, and, often, of flaming color, of which the foreground catches a gleam in some quiet pool. It is said to have been Rousseau's practice to postpone the painting of the sky until after he had realized his impression of the ground and trees. "It is probably true," observes M. Camille Monclair, "and this method of procedure was a remnant of the classical spirit."

The surmise may be correct, but it does not go deep enough. Rousseau had the scientific intellect and an imagination profoundly impressed with the concrete,

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tangible evidence of force and energy. As an artist it was the elemental qualities of permanence and strength in nature that occupied his genius. Moreover, temperamentally, he had little or nothing of the dreamer or visionary, who can disengage himself from the facts of earth and construct castles in the air. He was, on the contrary, a thinker, close, accurate and logical; a very serious one, leaning toward moroseness, more inclined to sensitiveness than sympathy. The latter or a sense of duty made him cling to his wife, a woman of the forest, although she had become insane and Millet advised placing her in an asylum. But he became estranged from his devoted friend, Dupré, when the latter and not himself received the Cross of the Legion of Honor; and the suspicion is aroused that this or other official slights which Rousseau received were partly due to the attitude of mind expressed in his own words: "I am not understood"; an idea which, if it grows to a fixity, may easily become morbid.

One instance of misunderstanding Rousseau is exhibited by some writers who affirm that he had "but little of the imaginative temperament." The supposition appears to result from the old-fashioned separation of the "ideal" from the actual; the former being regarded as something fabricated by the imagination, floating on wings amid clouds, iridescent with light "that never was on sea or land." Such was Italian idealism, the tradition of which persists unfortunately even to the present day; notwithstanding Rembrandt, Constable and the Barbizon artists. For it was part of their genius that they discovered and revealed the ideal

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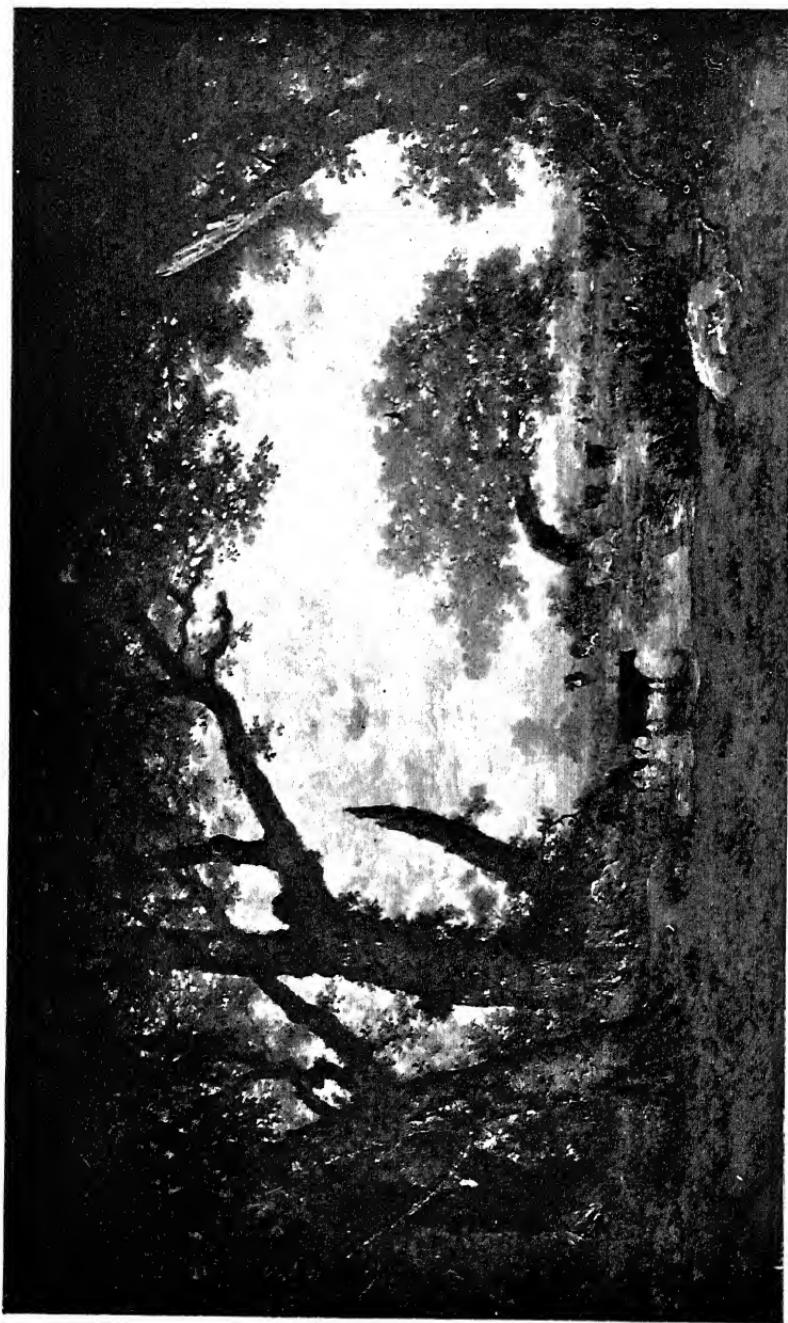
in the everyday aspects of nature. They possessed that order of imagination which divines the noble in the commonplace; the beautiful in ugliness; both aspiration and means of realization in the actual. Perhaps one might call this the scientific imagination as compared with the empiric. It is growing day by day to be the modern conception of the finest kind of imagination, notwithstanding that many artists do their best to retard the growth by clinging to the old remnant of the traditional "ideal." They prate, for example, of an "ideal head," which in plain English represents a girl's face, prettified out of likeness to nature: with smoothly bevelled features, inflated eyeballs, simpering mouth, a china-finish to her complexion and a rose stuck coquettishly in her hair. Meanwhile the layman, recognizing that such and similar flub-dub contradicts the actualities of life, shrugs his shoulders and "guesses it's all right" for artists, but that art clearly "has nothing in it" for the practical man. Whereupon the artist retorts that the latter is a philistine.

Looked at in this modern light, Rousseau is found to have possessed not only imagination, but imagination of that very high order which anticipates the faith and consciousness of posterity. For to the vast majority of his contemporaries the "ideal landscape" was one fabricated out of the artist's fancy in the fashion of Claude Lorrain. To look for idealism in what the world considered vulgar; to find it there and gradually to compel the world to recognize it—that was the great gift of Rousseau to modern art and life. Perhaps only a Frenchman could have achieved it, since the prestige



THÉODORE ROUSSEAU

THE EDGE OF THE FOREST—SUNSET



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of his country was behind him. Constable, for example, was ignored by his own countrymen, until they had learned from France to value the poetry of the *paysage intime* and so to offer belated and none too generous homage to their own artist who had helped to inspire it.

That Rousseau should thus become recognized as the leader of the group and the father of modern landscape was due to the qualities of his imagination, which may be summed up as force and concentration. His was not a roaming but a penetrating imagination, whose grip tightens to conviction. When one thinks of Rousseau there rise to one's memory a stretch of rude, firm earth, some oaks and boulders; autumn time, noontide or sunset. These supply the motif for so many of his pictures. They symbolize for him those qualities of nature which his own qualities of imagination lead him to dwell upon: its permanence and strength. Nor do we find their repetition pall upon us. The artist's conviction of their import is so absolutely his soul's faith that we join with him in worship of these elemental mysteries. For mysteries they are felt to be; no longer ordinary facts, by the time they have been submitted to the alchemy of Rousseau's imagination.

Some French critic has remarked that the Louvre picture, *The Edge of the Forest, Sunset* (p. 141), presents a synthesis of Rousseau's art. There could scarcely be a nobler one. Oaks grouped to left and right, their upper branches locked in an embrace; a shattered stem and riven limbs, reminder of disorder in nature; a boulder in solid contrast to the stable movement of the trees; a smaller oak beyond, bent over in compliance to supe-

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rior force, and a spreading level plain of pasture, suggesting the kindlier, more intimate permanence of nature; a sky, flushed with the glow of sunset, which dyes a pool close by us in the foreground, where cows, which have yielded their milk to human needs, are cooling tranquilly or drinking. Transmuted into the abstract by Rousseau's genius, this epic of nature and man's relation thereto is *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in one; the grandeur of life's strain and stress and the blessedness of succeeding calm and relaxation.

This picture is also characteristic of Rousseau's use of color; for, while he, like Corot, anticipates the Impressionists in the "division of color," which he may have learned from Constable or Delacroix, he still shows himself a tonalist and an adherent of the old idea that harmony demands predominance of the warm hues. He falls short of Constable as a painter of nature's coloring and as a translator of this into abstract color symphonies does not rank with Corot. The latter, by the way, was much in advance of his contemporaries, except Delacroix, in recognizing that the fundamental principle of chromatic harmony is not a matter of hue but of light and dark tones. By Goya, who so remarkably anticipated the trend of modern painting, this principle had been enunciated in the paradox: "There is no color in nature, only light and dark." Delacroix may have learned the principle from Goya during the latter's visit to Paris about 1820, or while he himself was visiting Madrid in 1832. At any rate he would find corroboration of it in the Spanish artist's paintings and etchings. But, while Delacroix applied the princi-

## THE POETRY OF THE PAYSAGE INTIME

ple mainly on the warm side of the palette, it was from the cool scale that Corot achieved his most characteristic harmonies; moreover, with less reliance upon hues and a fuller acceptance of the principle of light and dark than even Delacroix.

Rousseau's characteristic color harmonies have been aptly compared to masses of molten metals, out of which flash the splendor of liquid gems. But it must not be forgotten that one of his masterpieces is *The Hoar Frost* in the Walters Collection in Baltimore, which was painted in 1845. The date serves to remind us that American collectors were among the first and the most generous clients, not only of Rousseau but of the whole Barbizon group. And, since the appreciation of them which the American artists, William Morris Hunt and John La Farge, did so much to establish has continued to the present time, it is in this country that the greatest number of fine examples of their work exists.

Narcisse Virgile Diaz de la Peña (1802–1876) and Jules Dupré (1812–1889) are the two members of the group who reveal most conspicuously the Romantic spirit, while Charles François Daubigny is the nearest to Constable. Dupré is very uneven, his late work especially being labored and heavy in its handling. It represents the deterioration of a motive that always inclined toward the melodramatic and by repetition became mechanical. It is deeply, often violently, emotional and depends for its effects upon striking contrasts. Yet in his choicest moments Dupré could render with fine sincerity the solemn calm of sunset or the

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conflict of swollen storm-clouds. Probably, however, he was at his best when interpreting the effects that follow thunder-showers, when the cloud-forms are broken with intervals of clear sky and the level expanse of pasture, juicy and richly hued, is barred with moving lights and shadows. In these moods there is no hint of an emotional parade of feeling; a wide and genial wholesomeness prevails.

Diaz was more purely the painter. Even his landscapes reveal less the sentiment of nature than the poetry of the palette; and as a colorist he is closest of the group to Delacroix. He understood the principle of division of color, applying the pigments pure and juxtaposing their tones in a delicate tissue of nuances, and used with excellent effect the contrasts of complementary hues. Thus he rendered the effects of shadow without heaviness or opacity. He loved to break up his lights, choosing for his subject the recesses of the forest where the light percolates through the interstices of the boughs and foliage in countless gleams, reflections and refractions, or open spots of woodland landscape in moments following a shower, when the light breaks fitfully from shifting clouds, and trunks, leaves and grass scintillate with glistening raindrops. Again, in his nudes, draped figures and groups of women in gay, Oriental costumes he breaks up the light into innumerable facets, touched in with a peculiar flickering brush-stroke, which curiously resembles that unusual example of Vermeer of Delft, *Diana and her Nymphs*, in the Hague Gallery. In his handling of the flesh-tints Diaz, like Corot, exhibits the influence of Correggio;

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imparting to the surfaces a quivering softness and a certain *morbidezza*. But he has not Corot's gift of giving his figures spherical form and placing them in space; in which respect he is again inferior to Monticelli, with whom his phantasies of brilliant orchestration suggest comparison. Diaz designed arabesques where Monticelli constructed a concave space and peopled it with blossoming forms. Yet despite these limitations which comparison with greater men reveal, Diaz remains a fascinating master of seductive harmonies.

Daubigny was the junior of Diaz by only fifteen years, while not more than five separated him from Rousseau and Dupré. Yet his work, compared with theirs, has a distinct character of modernity. It may result partly from the absence of any suggestion of the Romantic spirit in the placid, simple landscapes; but is also due, particularly in later examples, to the increasing breadth of Daubigny's brushwork. Meier-Graefe has drawn attention to the sketches of Constable, as being probably the example for this freer and broader handling, while the influence of Manet and his followers may well have contributed its share. In an early picture, *The Timber Wagon*, recently sold in New York, Daubigny appears as the draftsman rather than the painter. A timber wagon is approaching up a slight incline, bordered with banks to which cling the finger-like roots of beech trees that are just beginning to don their yellow and reddish livery, while at the back meadows spotted with trees stretch back to a château. The drawing, particularly of the trees, exhibits a conscientious fidelity to the natural facts that is extreme. The

## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

treatment is wholly lacking in pictorial synthesis; and exhibits a dryness and hardness, quite unlike the rich and juicy handling of his matured style. For it is Daubigny's special contribution to modern landscape painting that he adapted the loose and fluent method of Constable's sketches to a finished picture. It led him to experimenting with very large canvases, several of which were standing in his studio at his death. One of them, representing a shepherd folding his flock by moonlight on a misty night, is inclined to be flat and dull, with lack of air or luminosity; while another, showing a stretch of brown soil broken up into plots of various cultivation, realizes magnificently the salient features of the receding planes. It is a fine example of organic construction; of the under-building of the composition, for possibly it represents an unfinished canvas; though, even so, if placed like a mural decoration far enough from the eye, it would probably appear completely self-sufficient. For admirers of Daubigny who would study his ability as a landscape builder and the means employed, a visit should be made to the Mesdag Museum at the Hague. For here are examples showing various stages in Daubigny's method of plotting, constructing and completing the composition.

Constable's example having drawn attention to the Dutch masters of the seventeenth century, it was but a question of time when French artists would go to Holland itself for inspiration. Constant Troyon (1810-1865) was among the first to be drawn thither.

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Already he had displayed a decided bias for animal painting; it was therefore natural that when he visited Holland he should realize their pictorial relation to landscape. He would be impressed also by the flat polders stretching to the limit of sight, the low horizons and high vaulting skies. The effect of these mingled impressions was an invigoration and broadening of his landscapes. They became instinct with a sense of spaciousness. The scene may or may not be one which involves actual distance of vision; but it is none the less enlarged in its expression, becoming associated with the feeling of spaciousness. The same is true of the sky, however much or little may be shown. It is felt as a part of what is vast, buoyant with alert air, stirred with breeze or mellowed with large warmth. And to this wholesome vigor responds the earth, teeming with fecundity, whereof the bulky cattle are the animate expression. According with these qualities is the impersonal character of Troyon's landscape. No mood of the artist's self interrupts their ample benignity, the expression of the Earth sentiment. It is because of this elemental significance that Troyon transcends the almost purely naturalistic landscapes with cattle of his pupil, Émile Van Marcke (1829–1890) and the latter's daughter and pupil, Madame Marie Diéterle. But what a magnificent synthesis of the character of animate and inanimate nature these two present, so superior in technical accomplishment as well as in expression and beauty of color to the more photographic naturalism of Madame Rosa Bonheur (1822–1899).

Once in a while Charles Jacque (1813–1894) sur-

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prises us by the grand idyllic feeling of an upland pasture, sculptured upon which are the statuesque forms of a shepherdess and her flock. More often, however, it is the intimacy of some stable, silvered uncertainly by the light admitted through a narrow window or the varied detail of a farmyard, busy with its four-footed and feathered occupants that engages him; scenes alive with the quiet poetry of the country life. Over a technique that betrays the feeling of a sculptor or engraver rather than a painter, he triumphs by sheer force of knowledge and love of animal life. But, on the whole, his most artistic work is comprised in etchings, where his burin moves with fluency and the medium demands economy of means and consequently a more suggestive synthesis.

## CHAPTER XI

### MILLET AND SOME OTHERS

THE Master-BUILDER of the Barbizon group was Jean François Millet. What Rousseau did for pure landscape he extended to include the human subject and advanced Corot's reconciliation of the Natural and Classic into immediate relation with modern life. Like them, he informed the material with the spiritual; but his imagination was more embracing than Rousseau's, more profound than Corot's; withal, more human than either and more in tune with his time. He was the first artist to catch the voice of the new era and to set aringing, not only in studios, but also in the consciousness of the modern world the new message of humanity and labor.

It is unnecessary to dwell upon the incidents of his early life; boyhood and young manhood spent upon the hill-farm of Gruchy; the daily routine of labor, illumined by the influence of a mother from whom he learned his Bible and by the instruction of an uncle who taught him Latin and to love Virgil; his short and dismal studentship under the classicalist, Delaroche; his early marriage and effort to live by painting little nudes; then his retreat to Barbizon and gradual discovery of himself in his first characteristic picture, *The*

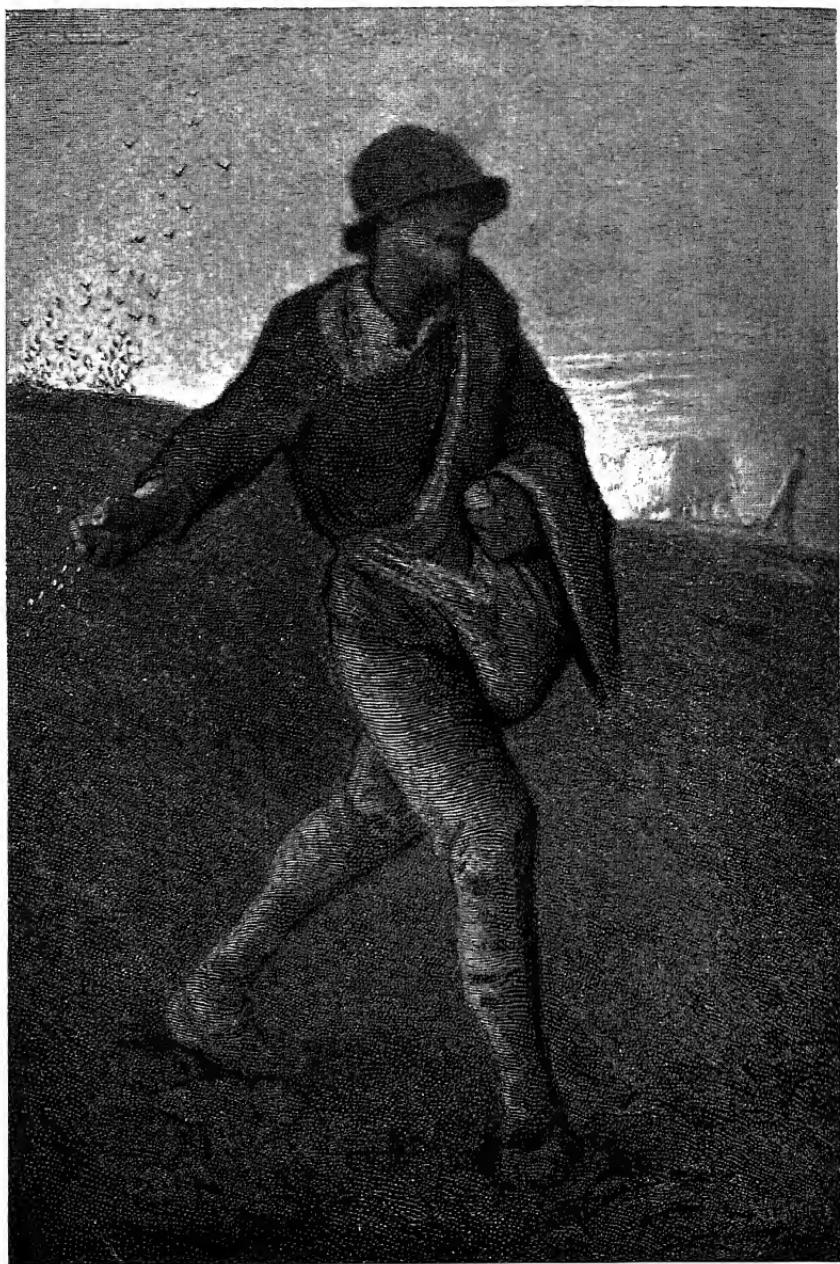
## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

*Winnower.* Hitherto, in his efforts to be an artist, he had struggled against his own nature, trying to put himself in the skin of others; now, at Barbizon, he had resumed the experience of his early life. Henceforth he would paint only what he understood and sympathized with. Already this rude peasant of the picture, as he stoops his head over his toil, draws back his shoulders to balance the forward thrust of the arms and bends his knees to relieve the weight of the sieve, proclaims his author's mastery in a new expression of age-old principles of art. For its kinship is Greek.

In later years Millet said of Theocritus, whose poetry shared his affection with that of Virgil, Shakespeare and Burns: "Theocritus makes it evident to me that one is never more Greek than when one simply renders one's own impressions, let them come whence they may." The words are a curious echo of the already quoted extract from Shaftesbury's writings, published in 1711: "We should emulate the Greeks, not imitate them. We are most like the Greeks when we are most ourselves." Already in *The Winnower* Millet exhibited by instinct the truth of what he later formulated in words.

The picture is the product of instinct: the source from which we are beginning to realize that all great achievements spring. Millet's instinct, as in the case of the Greeks, led him to study nature: that aspect of nature which he knew, under which his own early life had been naturally developed; and he learned from nature, as the Greeks did, her own rhythm. The movement of *The Winnower* is the result of a perfect coördina-





THE SOWER

MILLET

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tion of the several parts of the body to the action, demanded by the toil if it is to be efficiently performed. There is the requisite conservation as well as expenditure of energy; the absolute adjustment of contrasted and repeated muscular action and reaction; without, it is true, the splendid dash of *The Sower*, but in its slower and more constrained effort, no less perfect. The eyes of Millet's contemporaries, trained by classicalism to look only at contours and to estimate the drawing of a figure by the sculptural quality of the outside lines, saw in this one only a barbarous contradiction of what it held sacred. For *The Winnower* is not an expression of lines, but of mass in movement. And this is the primary virtue of Greek sculpture; the beauty of contours being superadded. But the academic art of Millet's day reversed this; producing, for example, the faultless outlines and the nullity of mass of a Bouguereau.

What is the explanation of Millet's immediate recovery of the principles of Greek art? First, surely, that he allowed his instinct to lead him; ignorant, probably, at the time of whether it was leading; but, secondly, and more directly definitive, that the nature which he represented he had experienced in his own body. He himself had winnowed wheat and exercised his intelligence to discover at once the easiest and the most efficient way of doing it. To natural instinct had been added the acquired instinct. What another artist, differently brought up, but with corresponding determination to arrive at the simple truth would have had to search for with long observation and close analysis, he rendered as an immediate and first hand impression.

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He could actually put himself inside the winnower's skin and participate in his action.

This raises an interesting question: How far is the capacity of an actor needful to a painter? For it is clear that few painters start with Millet's advantage of rendering impressions with which their personal experience has rendered them familiar. Usually it is only by imagining the sensation, that a painter can reproduce it in action. But how many have this gift, which is essentially the actor's? Very few, it is to be judged, if one studies the majority of figure subjects. For in them the figures are merely attitudinizing; there is no real action, still less the continuity of action that makes for movement and even less frequently the coördination of movement which evolves the final excellence of rhythm. The average painter is dependent on his model and abuses the latter for the deficiency which is inherent in himself. For no artist, whatever his medium may be, can reproduce what he himself cannot feel.

Millet in his Paris days walked the Louvre. It was there that he fed his imagination, following again the instinct which lead him to what was fundamental in the great art of the past. Meanwhile he was unquestionably influenced by the modern master Daumier, whose drawings were exposed in every kiosk on the boulevards.

Daumier was the first of his contemporaries to revive the method of structure-building that characterized the drawing of Rembrandt, Hals and Velasquez, and in doing so was the originator of the principle enforced later by Manet and the Impressionists. He constructed in masses, securing by a logical coördination of dark and

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light an illusion of modeling even in flat planes. In his black and white work he added the expressional force of eloquent and decisive line; but it is always the mass that determines the quality of the line as well as its direction. The line instead of enclosing empty space is the definitive margin of the mass. And the latter is designed to interpret action, movement and rhythm. It is not the external shape but the inherent life of the form that Daumier was bent on interpreting. His method shears off superficialities and lays bare the structural expression. The result is vitally and characteristically expressional.

To recognize Millet's indebtedness to Daumier is not to rob the Barbizon artist of credit for original creativeness. One might as well think it belittles him to acknowledge that he gained from the study of Greek art. For while Millet profited by the example of the latter and of Daumier, he was independent of both in his personal interpretation of the principles. Note, for instance, how he applied the principle of distributed movement. It is an observation of Rodin's that no part of the form can express the movement of the whole. This must be distributed in fractional quantities throughout all the parts. Already *The Winnower* proclaims this principle, which again and again supplies the clue to Millet's mastery of construction, until it reaches its most triumphant expression in *The Sower* and in his drawings and etchings.

Sometimes, however, the totality of the movement is distributed between two or more figures; in the celebrated example of *The Gleaners*, between three. One

## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

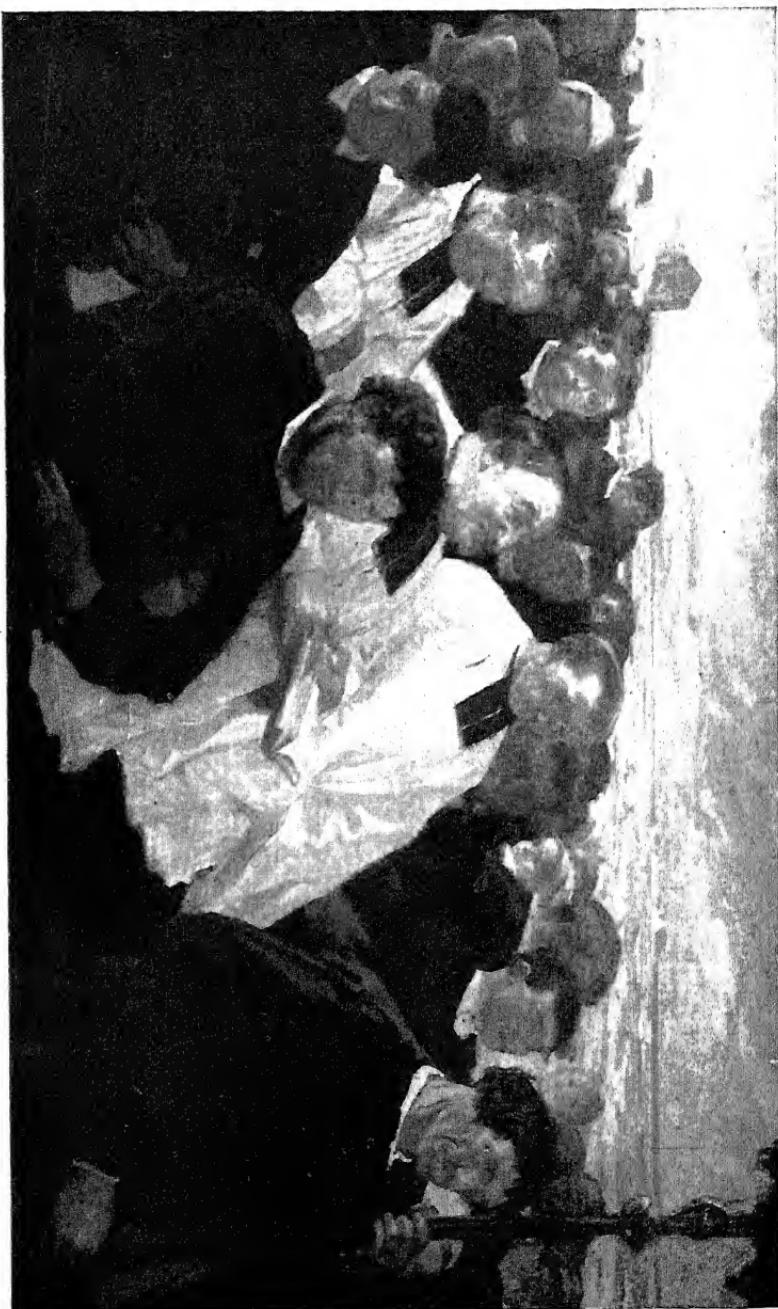
of the women is walking with body bent forward from the hips and face intent on the ground, searching for an ear; another, holding a handful of wheat behind her back, is doubled forward over the ground reaching down, while the third, stooping still lower and resting her handful of wheat on one knee is in the act of grasping. The stretch of her arm is more upright than that of the other stooping woman; and the whole action of her body is more crouching upon its lower part, more conserving of its force, even in the act of accomplishment. The greatest expenditure of force is in the movement just previous to accomplishment, represented in the action of the other stooping woman, while the third figure, alleviating the weight of her bent back by holding her hands above her knees, interprets the anticipatory action. By studying merely a photograph of the picture one can see how the total action of glean- ing is distributed among the figures, so that a wave of coördinated movement passes freely and naturally through the group. Shut from view any one of the figures and at once the fluidity is checked; the chord of character-expression snapped.

The landscape of *The Gleaners* involves a distant view of ricks and harvesting, touched in minutely with so exact a characterization that it recalls the mastery with which Rembrandt realized in his etchings the character of level vistas of landscape. For in admiration of Millet's figure-work it is easy to overlook his merit as a landscapist. This also appears to best advantage in his drawings and etchings. For in them he proves not only his constructive genius in mass-building and

TITLE PROCESSION

LUXEMBOURG

LUCIEN SIMON





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realizing character, but also his expressional ability to render the spiritual impression of the scene. For here he is not hampered by the comparative poverty of his color-scheme or by his deficiency as a brushman, which too often resulted in his painted surfaces being confused in handling and like greasy wool in texture. The drawings, on the contrary, exhibit his knowledge and feeling unimpaired.

The character of the knowledge and the quality of the feeling are alike determined by Millet's temperament of profound earnestness. He himself said that the cry of the soil (*le cri de la terre*) was ever in his soul. When once he had resolved to harken to it he set his whole life and his work to its pitch. The meaning of the cry has been sometimes misunderstood. It was not, as Millet heard it, the stifled moan of laboring peasants sweating out their meager lives in the fields of Barbizon. It was the cry of the soil itself, of the earth-mother calling to humanity. The peasant was but the symbol of the universal. Millet was not a sentimentalist. More than anything he dreaded the imputation of emotionalism; and it is full of irony that his remark about *The Angelus*, that he wished people to seem to hear the church bell, should have led to so much sentimental vaporizing over this picture. Here, as always, he was simply trying to visualize the character of the scene; and, since its momentary aspect was affected by the sound, he wished to make the spectator conscious of the latter as explanatory of the character and expression. Perhaps without the addition of the name the subject would not have explained itself, which cannot

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be said of any other work of Millet's; a fact that reduces the merit of *The Angelus*. That the artist abetted this insufficiency by talking of a bell was a misfortune, since it wrapped the already mellifluous word *Angelus* in a haze of idealized sentiment, which has spread between Millet and the public, blinding the latter to his real greatness.

Millet's imagination was of the philosophic cast which precipitates the local and the temporary and extracts from them the essence of the elemental and universal. Inured to toil from his youth, he was not in revolt against labor. It was man's necessary share in that universal scheme of labor which held the stars in their courses and made earth yield her fruits in due season. Everything was coöordinated on a universal plan. The peasants working in the fields of Barbizon were at once a part and a symbol of the whole order. Beauty, as Millet understood it, was not to be looked for in their faces and figures, but in their coöperation with the divine scheme. His ideal of beauty was the harmony of fitness and coöordination and Millet found it expressed in the lives of the peasants as they contributed their daily stint to the world's routine. Conservative by instinct, he pondered the grandeur of this routine, stretching back in endless perspective through the vista of the ages; profoundly serious, he invested its significance with a kind of fatalism. The idea of a future of happier routine through labor and life being more efficiently and harmoniously coöordinated escaped him. It was not as a prophet of progress that Millet enriched the world, but as the constructor of founda-

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tions on which progress must be achieved. His example tended to enforce the new ideas of the dignity of manhood and labor and the need of building the ideal on the practical, everyday things of life. The influence of his philosophic acceptance of life has been none the less potent that it was with him an instinct and not a thesis to be preached. He preached only by example; and the lesson, because of its indirectness, has gone wider and more deeply home.

Millet's influence upon art, however, has possibly been less embracing and profound. It was only the surface of his influence that average painters could skim off. They imitated his choice of peasant subjects and established from his example a cult of the ugly; but the grand style of his technique was as far beyond them as the scope of his philosophic seriousness. But Naturalism was in the air. The scientist was applying himself with a new zeal to the study of natural phenomena; substituting for much that had been empiric a closer analysis of facts; the mechanician under the impetus of the discovery of steam-power was coördinating labor and nature on a new basis, and a Balzac had captivated the world by his presentments of everyday life and character. The painters could not do otherwise than follow suit. Naturalism was the vogue and where else but among peasants was to be found the nearest approach to nature? It was so that they interpreted and followed the example of Millet.

Many, however, followed the example of Jules Breton (1827-1906) and carried out into the fields their

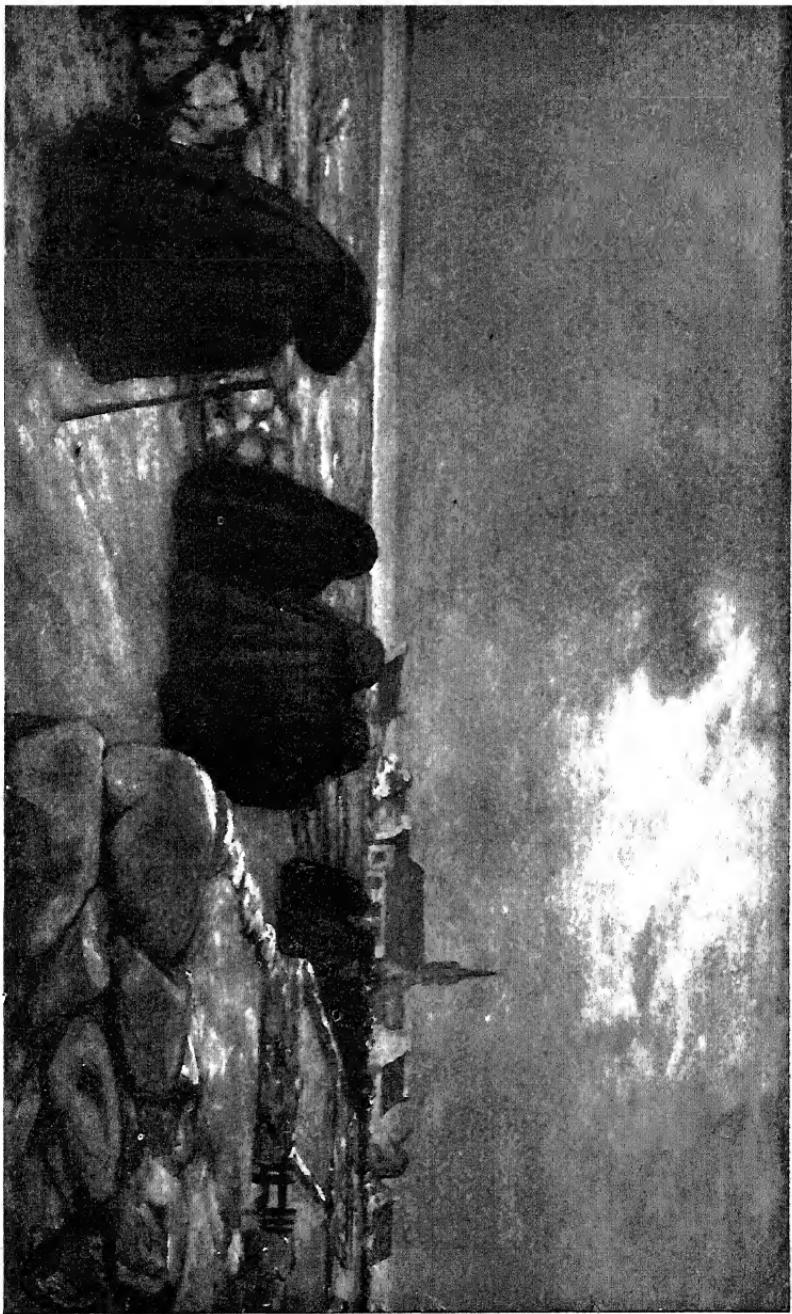
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academic predilections or their citified sentiment concerning milkmaids and haymakers, peopling their canvas-countrysides with the personages of the *Opera-Comique*. On the other hand, many followed Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848–1884) in his presentation of the crude and homely, qualified by a little sentiment. The latter helped him with the public, while his frank naturalness commended him to painters. He so completely fitted the conditions of his time that he enjoyed a reputation which, except in the case of his portraits, has scarcely been maintained. To-day we find his peasant pictures not only lacking in style, but also deficient in organic composition, little more than cross-cuts of life; and the crudeness of their naturalism has lost its original fascination. For since his time there has been a rebound to Realism.

It was the wont to regard Naturalism and Realism as practically identical terms. But the gradual recognition of two points of view in the study of nature has made it convenient to distinguish between them as connoting different motives. A man may study, as Bastien-Lepage did, the natural phenomena solely with reference to the facts themselves; or, like Millet, view them in relation to some larger horizon of ideas. To differentiate their motives we will call the former a naturalist; the latter, a realist. This use of realism or realist is simply a return to the old phraseology of the Realist philosophers who, in opposition to the Nominalists, maintained that the totality of a conception was more important than its component parts; that humanity, for example, is the reality; the individuals composing it being, as it

GOING TO CHURCH

CHARLES COFFIN





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were, merely incidental to the main idea. So to-day we may style him a realist who correlates the facts of life to the large principles of elemental and universal significance. It was the example of Ibsen that chiefly helped to promote this terminological distinction; and he, as a realist, is open to the same criticism as Millet. Both viewed life from its darker side; although in doing so they established principles upon which a happier condition of existence may be built in the future.

Judged by this distinction, most of the French painters of peasants and *ouvriers* are naturalists, whose work will not survive alongside that of Millet and the few others who have represented their subjects in relation to larger issues. It is difficult, for example, to expect that the coming generation will be interested in the local gloom of Jean François Raffaelli's (1850-) pictures of the Paris *ouvrier*, whereas the Breton subjects of Charles Cottet (1863-), notwithstanding their gloom and intensely local feeling, involve a relation to eternal issues of humanity, which should secure the interest of posterity. Posthumous fame may also be anticipated for the peasant pictures of Lucien Simon (1861-) who not only views his subject in relation to a wide horizon but also reinforces this stimulating appeal by a vigorous and characterful technique. He is with little doubt the strongest brushman of the peasant painters of France, and both in portraiture and domestic genre has also done work of notable force and charm.

## CHAPTER XII

REALISM—G. COURBET

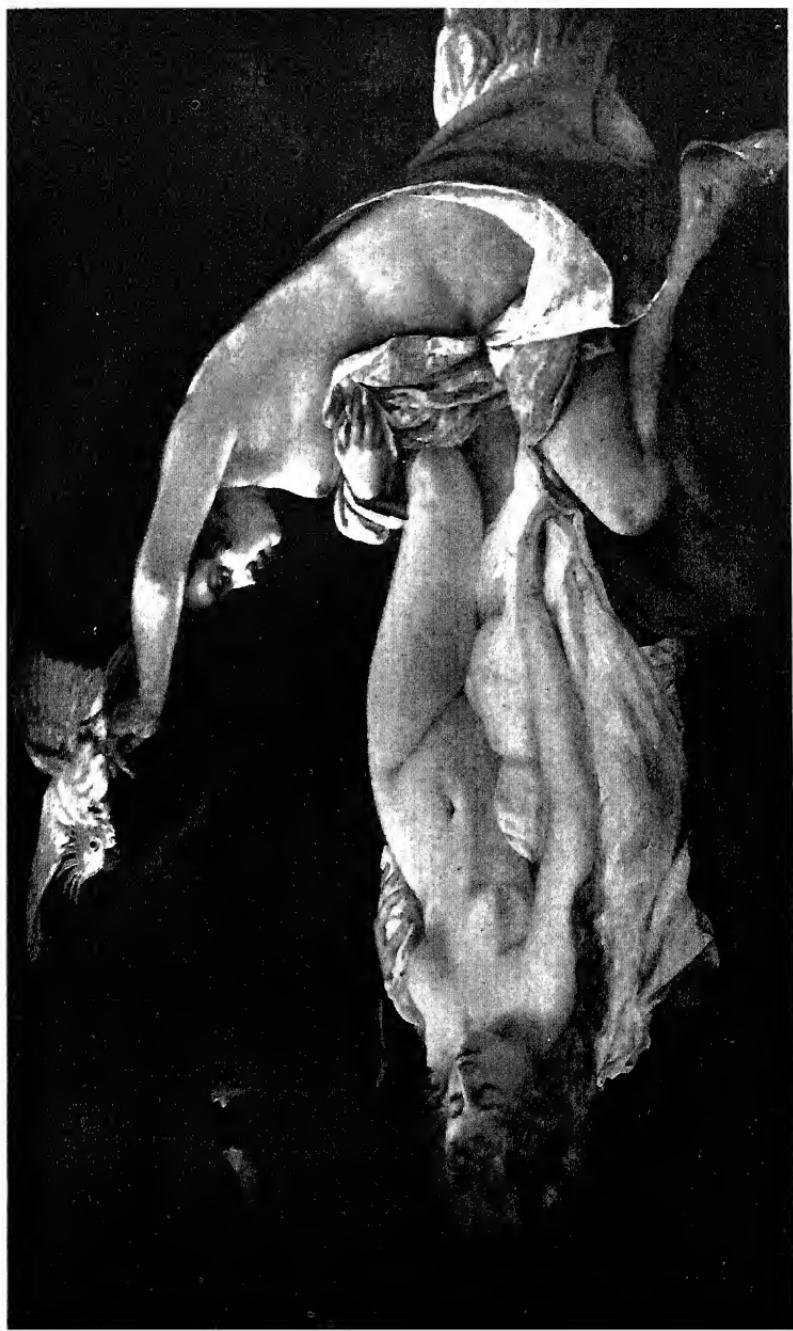
BY the middle of the nineteenth century, in France as well as in England, the achievements of science and mechanics and the newly developed sense of individualism had dominated the spirit of the age. Dogma was discredited; the old belief undermined; the world was looking for “truth” in the perceptible facts of knowledge; religion was being desiccated by rationalism or discarded in favor of materialism. In the specific field of painting the representative of this changed attitude toward life was Gustave Courbet (1819–1878).

At the World’s Exposition of 1855, Courbet was dissatisfied with the official treatment of his pictures. Accordingly he removed them and exhibited separately outside the grounds in a wooden hut, which bore the conspicuous legend, “Realism—G. Courbet.” This was four years after the appearance in the Salon of *The Stonebreakers* and *Funeral at Ornans*. He had come up to Paris in 1839. Refusing to submit his independence to the control of any teacher, he made the rounds of the galleries and from the example of the old masters gradually acquired a style of his own. Meanwhile, his criticism of present and past artists was out-



GUSTAVE COURBET

LE RÉVEIL



## REALISM—G. COURBET

spoken and scathing. He admired Ribera, Zurbarán and Velasquez, was drawn toward Ostade and venerated Holbein; but could not tolerate Raphael, whom he held chiefly responsible for “the fever of imitation” which, he asserted, was prostrating the art of France. Toward the end of the forties when Ingres was at the height of his power and Couture’s *Decadence of the Romans* had created a sensation and Jean Louis Hamon (1821–1874) and others of the so-called “Neo-Greek” group were producing their pretty little china-painted pictures of classicalistic idylls, Courbet’s tirades against authority and classicalism had made him a marked man. Students gathered round him and echoed his free-thought. For as yet Millet, working quietly in Barbizon, was unheeded, and the time demanded somebody who would trumpet the claims of the modern naturalistic spirit. The man was found in Courbet.

Courbet announced himself a realist; and possibly he was one in the sense which has been defined above, although his theories of art may at first sight suggest that he was an out-and-out naturalist. For he is on record as declaring that “the principle of realism is the negation of the ideal.” But in this repudiation of the ideal as something which the painter should shun, he must be understood to refer to the kind of ideal that was held up as a nostrum by the academicians of his day, as it still is in ours. Courbet had no use for nymphs in cheese-cloth draperies, posing in allegory; nor for religious pictures representing after the Italian manner men and women supported on clouds, angels and views of Heaven, nor for the posing and paraphernalia of

## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

resuscitated historical scenes. For, as he said, "realism can only exist by the representation of things which the artist can see and handle. Painting is an entirely physical language, and an abstract, invisible, non-existent object does not come within its province. The grand painting which we have stands in contradiction to our social conditions; and ecclesiastical painting, in contradiction to the spirit of the century. It is nonsensical for painters of more or less talent to dish up themes in which they have no belief, themes which could only have flowered in some spot and epoch other than our own. Better paint railway stations with views of the places through which we travel, with likenesses of great men through whose birthplaces we pass, with engine-houses, mines and manufactories. For these are the saints and miracles of the nineteenth century." In fact, it was with pseudo-idealism, the threadbare left-over of the past, that he quarreled. Meanwhile, his allusion to the "saints and miracles" seems to show that he could view the facts of things in relation to what he conceived to be the highest good of humanity. For he lived to "arrive at the emancipation of the individual and, finally, at democracy." That was his ideal to which he sought to correlate his life and work. Whether or not he would have admitted it, he was an idealist in what is coming to be the modern understanding of the word; one whose ideal is the betterment of the race and who looks for its fulfilment in the actual facts of life. As he said, "My object is to be not merely a painter, but a man. In a word to practise living art is the compass of my design." These are live words

## REALISM—G. COURBET

and almost sufficient of themselves to prove that Courbet was a realist idealist.

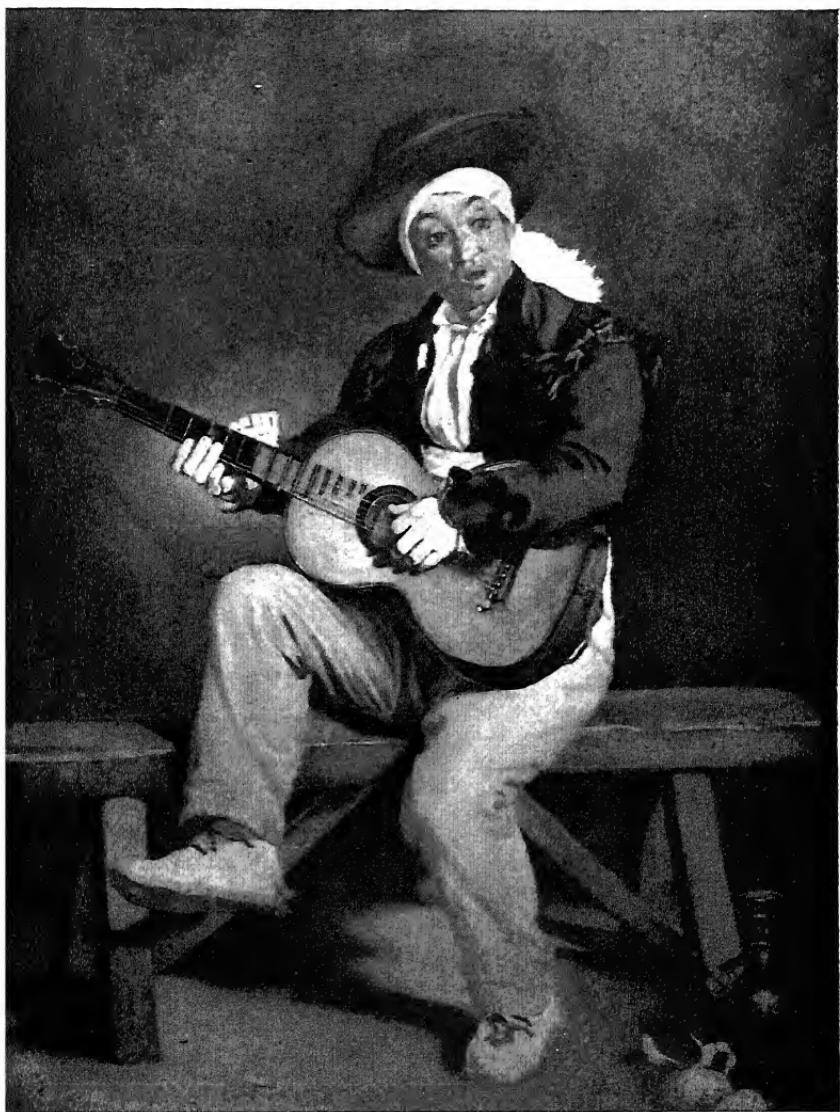
But let the evidence of his paintings speak. *The Stonebreakers*—an old man resting on one knee as he raises a hammer over a heap of stones and a young man adjusting his sinewy frame to the weight of a basket, filled with broken stones—represents the studied observation and truthful rendering of facts. For this reason the critics found it “an excessively commonplace subject.” But already in the figure of the younger man may be discerned something of the joy in physical force and wholesomeness which is characteristic of this artist’s work, himself a man of size above the average and possessed of great bodily strength as well as mental vigor. It is, however, mental force rather than the physical which characterizes the other picture of the same year—the *Funeral at Ornans*. For Courbet stripped the subject of all sentiment and ceremony; bared it to the bone; and in doing so has lifted its significance above the local and the personal. For death, viewed in the large, is but a temporary disarrangement of the routine of life; a momentary cessation from activity on the part of the living, while they pay their last respects to the dead, and then an immediate resumption of life’s routine. Meanwhile, behind this particular group of folk, gathered in front of the grave at Ornans, extends a high horizon line of hill, interrupted only by a slight depression. Its monotony is eloquent of that indifference of the outside world. One death more or less, what matters? We must all die; the world is for the quick, not the dead.

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But the critics were even more scandalized by subjects such as *Grisettes Lying on the Bank of the Seine*. Where was the trite coquetry with which other painters had invested these young persons, as they tripped the streets with piquant demureness and lifted their skirts to reveal the neat shoes and a hint of stockings? Courbet has "intentionally placed these girls in the most unrefined attitudes that they might appear as trivial as possible." One can fancy Courbet retorting that many of these girls are trivial and that when they get away from the city they lay aside their little artifices and sprawl in simple animal contentment. They may not be refined, but they are natural and wholesome. So too are Courbet's nudes.

The example, *Le Réveil*, has been selected for reproduction here (p. 161) because, while one of the figures illustrates these qualities the other is curiously and unusually classicalistic in pose and feeling. It reminds one of the fact that it was through study of the old masters that Courbet graduated into his naturalistic style. And here something of the process still lingers in the result. Meanwhile, the recumbent figure in pose and treatment recalls the superb nude which has been lent to the Metropolitan Museum. It is a panegyric on the glory of sound, abundant physicality; the basis on which rests the highest steeple-building of the race. What says Browning, himself a man as well as a poet, speaking through the mouth of Fra Lippo Lippi—

"The beauty and the wonder and the power,  
The shapes of things, their colors, lights and shades  
Changes, surprises—and God made it all!"



THE GUITARIST

ÉDOUARD MANET

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART



## REALISM—G. COURBET

In his ability to realize this through the human form Courbet takes rank as one of the greatest painters of the nude during the nineteenth century.

Probably, however, it is in his marines and landscapes that Courbet reaches his highest expression. They are entirely free from the suspicion, occasionally suggested in the figure subjects, that *embêter le bourgeois* was lurking in the artist's mind. The finest of them are equally free from local suggestion; they are abstracts of the elemental in nature; of force, vastness and the solemnity of silence. His seas are not invaded by ships; no dwellings interrupt the solitude of the shore; shore and sea wage conflict or lie placidly the one by the other in sole presence of the sky. Again, what a suggestion of immemorial age, hidden vastness and unbroken solitude pervades his forest glades! The deer rest under the shadow of the fern or bask in the patches of sunlight; the stags at rutting time meet and fight; over the carpet of snow the doe seeks the watering-place. Sometimes the hunter wakes the silence with his horn and his hounds violate the solitude; but for the most part Courbet's forests are the undisturbed haunts of the forest creatures, as if man were not.

## CHAPTER XIII

### MANET AND IMPRESSIONISM

**M**ANET was needed to complete Courbet. The latter had brought the motive of painting into touch with the spirit of the age, leading the painter to look for his subjects in the world of actual sight and to treat them solely in accordance with the facts of nature; but he had not furnished the example of a technique fitted to represent the vision naturally. His own, derived from the old masters, still relied on chiaroscuro for modeling and on tonality to draw the parts into a unity of ensemble. But in nature the colors, so far from presenting a tonal scheme, are apt to be characterized by contrasts and yet the effect is harmonious because the antipathies of color are dissolved in the lighted air which envelopes them. It was not until the painter was able to emulate the unifying effect of light and introduce the illusion of circumambient air into the spaces of his composition that he could represent the natural phenomenon naturally. This was Manet's contribution to the development of modern painting.

Edouard Manet was born in Paris in 1832, in the Rue Bonaparte, opposite the École des Beaux Arts. After spending nearly six years in Couture's studio he made a progress through the galleries of Germany,

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Vienna, Florence, Venice and Rome. Thus he emulated the independence of Courbet and, like the latter, began by painting pictures which reflected the influence of various old masters, particularly the Flemish and Caravaggio. Then he discovered Velasquez. Just as some forty years earlier the example of Constable had fertilized the development of French Romanticism and the School of *Paysage Intime*, so now in 1857 a collection of Velasquez' work in the Manchester International Exhibition was the immediate cause which ultimately resulted in French Impressionism. Sir William Sterling-Maxwell's "Life of Velasquez" was translated into French by G. Brunet, and provided with a *catalogue raisonné* by W. Bürger; the Spanish artist began to occupy the pens of Charles Blanc, Théophile Gautier and Paul Lefort, and the name of Velasquez resounded through the studios.

To this new influence Manet was the first to respond. In the early sixties appeared a number of pictures from his brush which proved how thoroughly he had absorbed the principles presented by the examples of Velasquez in the Louvre. Three of these early works by Manet are now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York: *The Guitarist*, *The Boy with the Sword* and *The Angels at the Tomb of Christ*. The most signal example of the period is *Olympia* of the Louvre; a nude, whose white figure is displayed upon the white sheet that covers the couch, while a negress dressed in red stands in the rear, holding a bouquet of flowers, surrounded by white paper. It now hangs near the *Odalisque Bathing* by Ingres, thus emphasizing the completeness of the re-

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volt from classicism involved in Manet's picture. The latter had been preceded two years earlier by *The Picnic*, in which Manet translated into modern terms a subject often used by the Venetians; namely, two young men in the dress of the day, seated on the bank of a river beside a nude woman, while another woman, clothed only in a chemise, is splashing in the water. It is not difficult to realize the howl of indignation and derision with which the academic camp and the public, following in its suit, greeted these two pictures. Not withstanding the support of Zola, Charles Ephrussi, Durany and other critics, Manet had to face a storm similar to that which had assaulted Courbet's *Funeral at Ornans* and the early works of Delacroix.

What, up to this point, in his following of Velasquez, had Manet accomplished? In the first place he had freed himself from traditional subservience to "interest of subject," and had asserted the painter's right to be interested, if he chose, solely in the pictorial rendering. He had also cut loose from the splendors of Rubens, the color-wealth of the Romanticists and the frigid beauty of line of the classicalists. His subjects, viewed in a cool, evenly diffused light, presented the sober range of hues in which blacks and whites and silvery grays are interspersed discreetly with blues and choice tones of red. The composition is not disposed upon any geometric plan or made to yield lines of grandeur or grace, but is determined solely by the motive of decorating the canvas. The forms are painted with a big brush in flat broad planes which admit no chiaroscuro and yet suggest plasticity. This results from the ac-

## MANET AND IMPRESSIONISM

curate discrimination of the values of planes and hues, the exact rendering of the quantity of light contained in and reflected from each. Thus an illusion has been created of the actual action of light and accordingly of atmospheric perspective and of air surrounding the full spaces and filling the empty ones of the composition.

For, in the second place, Manet through the example of Velasquez had discovered a way of looking at his subject which was entirely new in modern painting and precisely suited to the needs of its development. In the words of Meier-Graefe, he "naturalized the instincts" of the painter. He taught him to look at nature through his own eyes instead of through the medium of pictures; to paint what he *sees* rather than what he *knows* the subject involves: and to paint only so much as his eye embraces in a single vision; in fact, to render the totality of his subject as his eye actually receives it.

This represents the first stage in Manet's development, the period in which he was directly under the influence of Velasquez. The new departure came, when having assimilated the Spaniard's example, he launched forth independently. The Rubicon was passed shortly before 1870, when he was staying at the country home of his friend, the painter, De Nittis. The latter's wife happened to be seated in an easy-chair on the lawn, her baby in a cradle beside her, her husband lying on the grass. Manet, seated in the sunshine, painted the group in its environment of sunny greens and brilliant flowers. With *The Garden*, "*plein-air*" made its début in modern painting. Henceforth the principles of Velasquez were extended to out-of-door problems and to the end-

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less variety of effects produced by varying quantities and qualities of luminosity.

After the Franco-Prussian War, during which Manet served in the artists' corps and also as a lieutenant in the Garde Nationale with Meissonier as his Colonel, an exhibition was held at Nadar's Gallery, comprising his work and that of the men who were already ranging themselves by his side. Some of the pictures were catalogued as "Impressions" of this or that. Jules Claretie, in summing up the exhibition, spoke of it as a "Salon des Impressionistes." The term proved apposite and caught on. The modern consciousness, becoming aware of impressionism, labeled it and fixed it duly in the cabinet of the arts. Some proceeded to define it; Zola, for example, describing an impressionistic picture as "a corner of life seen through a temperament." For it becomes recognized that if the painter is to render what he sees instead of what he knows, it is but a step to painting it as he feels it, and thence but another step to relying so thoroughly on his feeling, that to accommodate the latter he will not hesitate to color and warp the facts; therefore, that impressionism as a mode is temperamental, with all that this implies of weakness as well as strength.

It is customary to limit the term, impressionists, to a group of painters including besides Manet, who has been called the Father of Modern Impressionism, Whistler, Degas, Renoir, Monet, Pissarro, Gillaumin, Sisley, Jongkind and a few others. There is no harm in thus preserving the identity of the new departure, unless it is allowed to obscure the fact that impression-

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ism as a principle penetrates modern life. It has long since ceased to apply to a particular method of painting. It represents not only the painter's way of observing and rendering the subject, but has become in a large measure the world's way.

It has penetrated other arts. Fiction and even history are being written on the principle of viewing the subject (as Zola again said of impressionism) in its *milieu* or environment and of relying upon suggestion, with its innumerable shades of allusion, corresponding to what the painters call "values," to create the *milieu*. Compare, for example, Kipling's method of creating a vivid impression in coöperation with the reader's imagination and that of George Eliot who relies upon the detailed statement. With what consummate use of suggestion-values Maeterlinck in "Les Aveugles" succeeds in setting the affliction of the blind in its *milieu* of solitary helplessness, so that we feel their desolation. To his "Pelleas and Melisande," Debussy composes music, which as far as possible dispenses with contrapuntal forms and by its reliance on tonal suggestions invests the soul-drama with spiritual atmosphere. Or contrast the more detailed art of a Bernhardt with the highly suggestive method of a Duse; or Miss Ruth St. Denis's dances with those of Miss Isadora Duncan. While the former depends largely upon elaborate stage effects and fascinates her audience by the structural beauty of her form and the detailed figures of the dance, the other eliminates as far as possible from our consciousness the perception of concrete form and figures, creating around herself an aura of suggestion, so that it

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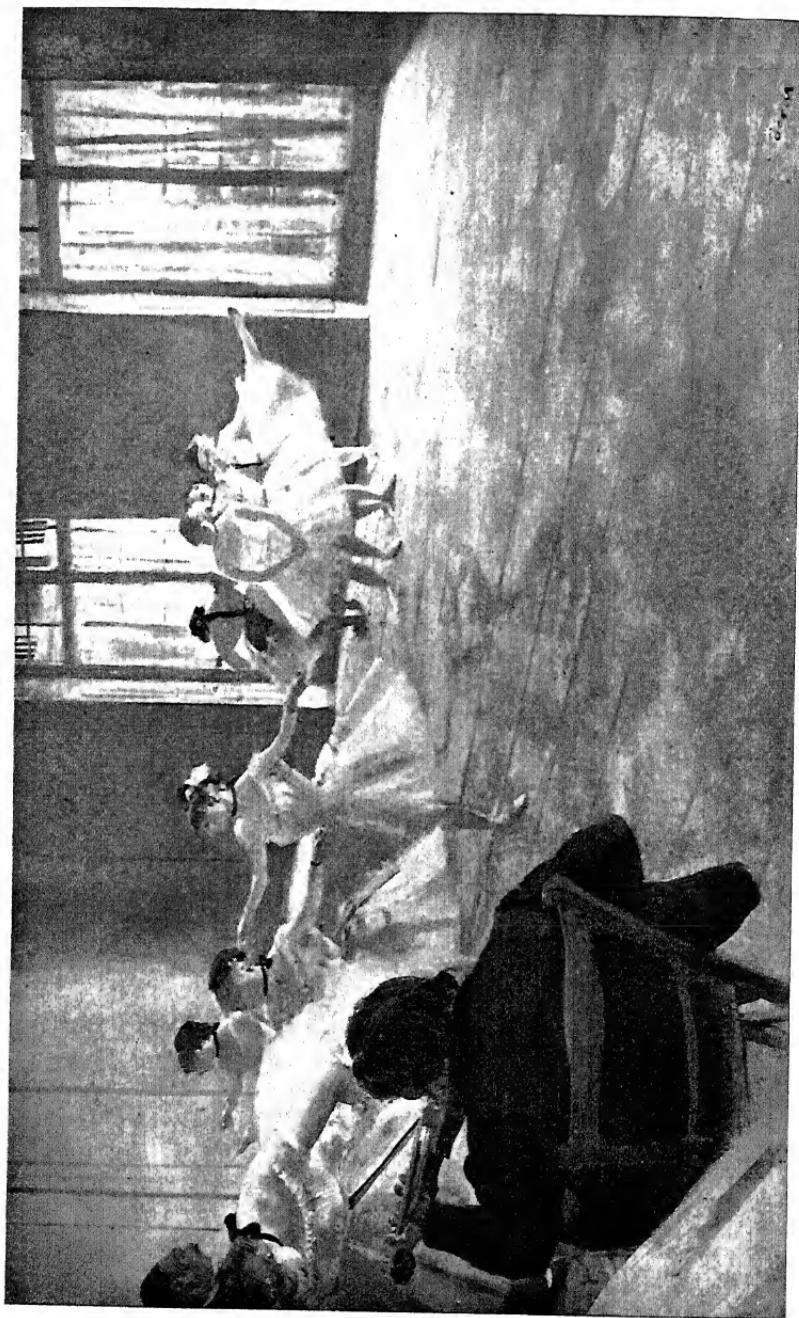
is the feeling or spirit of the dance rather than the fact of it which is rendered.

But the principles which underlie impressionism have also spread into the affairs of life. In their efforts to solve the problems of disease, poverty and crime, of education and other sociological questions the scientists are analyzing more keenly than ever the subject in relation to its environment. And on what is Mr. Taylor's system of "Scientific Management" based, if not on the study of the subject in its *milieu*? In treating certain cases physicians recognize to-day the value of suggestion as, it is most interesting to note, did Hippocrates, "the Father of Medicine," in the third century before the Christian era. Suggestion also is one of the most effective arrows in the quiver of the modern educator; while one of the most marvelous examples of the study of a subject in its environment and of treating it through suggestion is afforded by the Salvation Army.

Thus, without further multiplying instances, it is clear that the principles upon which impressionism is founded permeate modern life. The painter-impressionist is but one of the reflections of the spirit of his age. His distinguishing characteristic as a painter is not to be discovered so much in his motive as in his technique. The latter has been influenced in two directions: by the example of the Japanese and by hints derived from science. Of the former influence Degas, (1834—) is the most typical, while Claude Monet (1840—), Camille Pissarro (1831—1903) and Auguste



EDGAR DEGAS  
THE DANCING LESSON



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Renoir (1841-) are most representative of the scientific influence.

No sooner was impressionism weaned from the direct influence of Velasquez than its lusty growth began to assimilate a characteristic of the age. As stage-coaches were superseded by trains and the speed of the latter increased, the pace of life all round became accelerated. With ability to move quickly came a craze for change. Life must be crowded with sensations and to get them into the ordinary allotted span, they must be brief, the moment charged with piquancy. Reflecting this, the painter became intent on catching the fugitive impression, the fleeting movement of a woman's gesture; the light upon a landscape at such and such an hour; the momentary aspect of a crowded street or café. For this the old principles of composition, based on geometry, were unfitted. Their effect was at once too formal and too stable. The clue to a more spontaneous disposition of the forms and spaces was discovered in the Japanese prints which by the seventies were coming into Paris. These *Ukiyoyé* compositions had the charm of unpremeditation, surprise and fluent actuality, as they fixed on paper the evanescent aspects of the "Passing Show." The principle they involved was in the language of Japan *notan*; a spotting of dark and light, not systematically arranged but balanced with an artful though apparently artless irregularity. Spotting instead of building-up became the characteristic of impressionistic composition. Moreover, the Japanese composition presented a highly decorative arrangement,

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which from the first it had been the aim of impressionistic painters to achieve. Further, these prints echoed Velasquez's use of black, white, gray, blue and rose, meanwhile extending the gamut of hues and nuancing the tones with infinite subtleness.

While Degas developed these principles more thoroughly than any other of the Impressionists, he is none the less an original genius. His early work was inspired by the example of Ingres for whose art he has always had a high regard. Then he devoted himself to the naturalistic motive, finding his subjects in race-scenes and the femininity of Paris. No artist has so effectively synthetized the restless action of a bunch of racers as they canter to the starting post or wait the signal; the intricacy of angles which their shifting bodies present, the scintillating movement of the many legs and the tense gestures of the jockeys. With corresponding verve he analyzed the characteristic of the Parisian working-women and ladies of society and pitilessly revealed the jaded life of the *demi-mondaines*. Finally he explored the *coulisses* and stage of the Opera and Circus and the schools in which the girls of the ballet are trained. It is with these subjects that he is most widely identified. And they represent most characteristically this strangely haughty genius who betrays no taste for the world, holding himself severely aloof from society, allowing himself no intimates and looking out from his solitude upon the passing show with coldest scrutiny and cynical disdain. At least such an attitude of mind one may gather from the tired, ugly faces of his dancing girls and the cruelly grotesque

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contortions which he gives to their bodies and limbs. Yet these are but the facts of his models and of the conditions under which they are converted into Terpsichorean machines. When he depicts a ballerina, he will endow her with the zest of an artist and render her a miracle of grace.

When, however, one turns from the material to the manner of Degas, it is to discover in this apparently cold and cynical nature an artistic ardor and feeling for abstract beauty, such as few painters of the century have rivaled. He is as great a draftsman as a colorist, and a decorator unsurpassed. The arabesques of his compositions alike in his oil paintings and his inimitable drawings, water colors and pastels, are distinguished by a spotting as broad as it is subtle, which suggests the most unstudied naturalness and at the same time the most aristocratic feeling. High-bred, also is his instinct for color, which again has a strain of fascinating *bizarrie* and always an impeccable assurance. Perhaps he is never so wonderful as when he drags a stick of pastel across a drawing, leaving an evanescent suggestion of purple or yellow. Indeed, his use of color defies analysis; it is regulated by the genius of instinct. Degas has the natural gift of the colorist as Madame Melba has that of song.

Degas excepted, the original Impressionists are distinguished by their knowingly scientific use of color, in which they followed Delacroix who had taken his lead from Constable. It is based on the principle of division, that is to say, the placing of tints and tones side by

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side in separate touches. Delacroix affirmed this principle and its advantages frequently in his writings. He said, for example, "it is good that the touches should not be actually blended. They blend naturally at a given distance, by the law of sympathy which has associated them. Color thus obtains more energy and freshness." He acknowledges his indebtedness to the English painter. "Constable said that the superiority of the green in his meadows was due to the fact that it was composed of a multitude of different greens. The cause of the lack of intensity and life in the verdure of the average landscapist is that he makes it ordinarily of a uniform tint. What Constable says here of the green of the meadows can be applied to all tones." Accordingly Delacroix adopted the practice of covering his local hues with cross hatches of varying tones of the same hue or of its complementary, thus securing intensity and life.

However, it was not at once that the first Impressionists, Manet, Monet and Pissarro, derived this lesson from Delacroix. Originally they drew their inspiration from Courbet and then sat at the feet of Velasquez, emulating his blacks and whites and grays. Meanwhile, Delacroix had declared that "the enemy of all painting is the gray." But in 1871 Manet and Pissarro paid a visit to England and made the acquaintance of Turner. They returned home to pursue the motive of light: of light which is color and color which is light, luminosity, brilliance. It was then that they began to turn to Delacroix and to his division of color. They were fortified in their new departure by a discovery



POPLARS

CLAUDE MONET



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which their friend, Seurat, had made in a work on color by Professor Rood of Columbia University. The latter recorded an experiment made with a comparison of revolving disks, on one of which two colors were painted in separate sections, while the other was covered with the product of the same two colors, previously mixed on the palette. The revolution of the former disk produced a mingling of the colors far more intense and lively than the hue of the other one. It seemed to establish the superiority, for purposes of brilliance and intensity, of the optical blending to the actual blending on the palette. Seurat took the hint and communicated the results to Monet and Pissarro. Henceforth their work becomes distinguished by division of touch. They lay the pure colors side by side and depend upon the eye to effect the mingling.

So far they had resumed the experience of Delacroix. Then they passed beyond him, if not in splendor and majesty of coloring, at least in clarity and brilliance and in naturalness. For they contributed their share to the "naturalization of the instinct." They taught themselves and in time the public, to see nature more naturally. Manet had discovered that planes in out-of-door nature appear flat and that discords of color are harmonized by the envelope of light. But there were other natural facts to be learned, particularly those relating to shadow. Analysis proved that in nature there is no arbitrary recipe for shadow. Neither the blacks of Caravaggio and the school of the Darklings, nor the reds of Rubens, nor the grays of Van Dyck, nor the browns of Hobbema and Ruisdael; but that shadows

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always retain something of the local hue; and are affected by the near-by hues. Thus, the shadow under a girl's chin, as she sits in the sunshine on a lawn, may be impregnated with green. It was discovered that the shadows on snow are not black, which is the negative of color, but some tone of the coolest color, blue, or its warmer affinities, purple or lavender.

As a result appeared those canvases by Monet which at first outraged the purblind public, which had not as yet accustomed itself to see nature as it is, but relied for its color impressions on the conventions and formulas of indoor painting. To-day we know better, thanks to the Impressionists, and can appreciate at their full value Monet's exquisite landscapes made at Vétheuil on the Seine, on the coast of Belle-Isle, along the Thames in London and those miracles of luminosity represented in the series of early morning visions of Rouen Cathedral. Few artists have been gifted with an eye so analytic as Monet's, which led him in pure joy of experiment to multiply the varying aspects of a single haystack, according to the quality of light that played upon it at different times of day, or to find in a single lily pool a source of endless variety of color and light and decorative arabesques.

Moreover, there was a time when it was customary to consider this analytical eye of Monet's as objective as a mirror. We have discovered our mistake and realize now the subjective character of his vision: that it was not satisfied with the external aspects of the scene; that, in fact, it penetrated to its very core and brought to the surface its spiritual inwardness. For example, there is

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no painter who has revealed more intimately as it affects the spirit, the very essence of impression peculiar to the Seine near Paris, than Monet. Alfred Sisley, on occasions, rivals him but cannot maintain the pace of the physically powerful Monet, whose gait is so measured and yet leads so invariably to a refined interpretation of the spiritual suggestion of the scene.

## CHAPTER XIV

### RENOIR

THERE is a certain element of brutality in Monet, as in some other impressionists, to which however Auguste Renoir (1841—) presents the extreme of contrast. His art is of exquisite refinement, at once virile and voluptuous; replete with gaiety, grace and tenderness; supple as well as strong; magisterial, yet caressing; an art that in its latest phase bathes all it touches in a miracle of luminous color and yet asserts the beauty of form. Renoir is of all modern French artists the most typical of the permanent spirit of the race. He has resumed the thread that was snapped by the Revolution; carrying forward the art of Fragonard and thus uniting with the stream of inspiration which the eighteenth century derived from Rubens.

But equally he represents the new influence of the nineteenth century. His earlier work reflects the example of Courbet, Manet and Velasquez. It is his black, white and gray period which culminated in the magnificent pictorial treatment of *La Loge* (p. 180). In this there is no mistaking the influences that have operated; yet the manner as well as the feeling are original, purely French, and unequivocally Renoir. Fine as it is, however, it proved to be only the completion of a step in the artist's development, which was



LA LOGE

PIERRE AUGUSTE RENOIR



## RENOIR

now to embrace the color-technique of impressionism and the influence of Ingres. It was such examples of Ingres as the *Odalisque* and *Le Bain Turc*, the latter representing a number of nudes reclining in various attitudes of luxurious contentment around a marble bathing pool, that helped Renoir to consummate his art. They awoke in him the Frenchman's characteristic love of form and style; qualities in which the general run of modern impressionistic pictures are singularly deficient.

Renoir's decorative treatment under the new inspiration became more completely organic. Whereas in *La Loge* the arabesque is, as it were woven, now, particularly in his nudes, he models it. He has lost nothing of the exquisite manipulation of material, producing such beautiful mystery of surfaces; but he now extends the beauty of the surface back into the planes of his picture; making the forms mysteriously issue from the mystery of colored luminosity that fills the concaves of his spaces. Ingres has taught him, as he did Degas, to discover the grand line and the grandeur of mass; but, while Degas makes both count for character as well as beauty, Renoir's addition to the beauty is the palpitating splendor and warm life of movement. No other Frenchman has interpreted so unerringly a certain French type of child and young woman, velvety, plump and luscious as a peach in sunshine. Gesture, expression, texture, are characteristic. There is character in Fragonard, but it is rather that of convention; with Renoir it is character of nature.

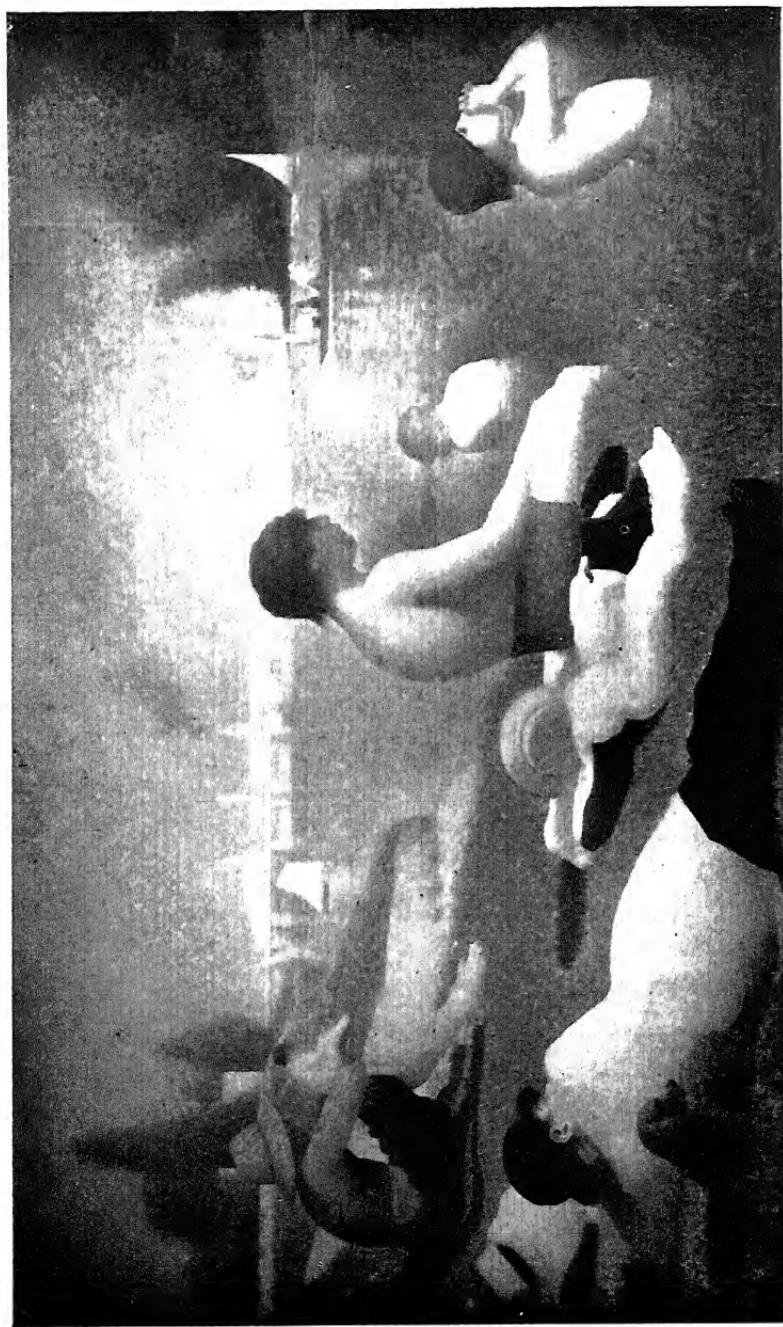
If one compares Fragonard's *Women Bathing* of

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the Louvre with similar subjects by Renoir it is to realize how far naturalism, filtered through the latter's temperament, has improved upon the Rococo. Renoir has discovered rhythms in the forms and gestures of his bathers that are nature's, caught and blended by art, in comparison with which Fragonard's women seem to be consciously posturing. The advance is yet more noticeable when the figures are viewed in relation to the water, sky and foliage. It is not only that again the natural beauty of the ingredients exceeds that of the studio convention; but that Renoir, by his subtler use of color and ability to evoke the luminosity of nature, welds all the parts of his decoration into a harmony of relation which envelops the surface and also impregnates all the receding planes. Renoir's decoration is more plastic, while at the same time the substance out of which it is constructed is infinitely more subtle and evasive.

In his search for the plastic Renoir will sometimes treat part of his figures, especially the hands, in a way that offends, alike, the naturalist and the academician. It is here that he asserts the claim of the Impressionist to subordinate, slur or even misrepresent a part if by so doing he can better achieve his impression of the whole. Meanwhile, though he has explored the possibilities of impressionism farther than any other artist of his age, his art has been at the same time more thoroughly representative of the great traditions of painting. This has been his final distinction, and on it will probably be based his reputation with posterity.





BATHING

GEORGE SEURAT

## CHAPTER XV

### NEO-IMPRESSIONISM

TO Impressionism has already succeeded Neo-Impressionism. One of its adherents, Paul Signac, has summarized the objects of the latter in his "D'Eugène Delacroix au Neo-Impressionnisme": "By means of the suppression of all impure mixing, by the exclusive use of the optical mingling of the pure colors, by a methodical division and the observation of the scientific theory of colors, it guarantees a maximum of luminosity, coloration and harmony, which have not yet been attained." In a word, the new movement relies more fully upon science. It has already been mentioned that Georges Seurat, after reading one of Professor Rood's experiments, was induced to apply the principle of division of color to his brushwork. At an exhibition of the Impressionist group held in 1886 this new influence became apparent. Georges Seurat was represented by *Un Dimanche à la Grande-Jatte*, while works closely akin to it in technique were shown by Camille Pissarro, his son Lucien Pissarro, and Paul Signac. Among other Frenchmen who later became identified with Neo-Impressionism, advancing the application of its principles by their independent researches and experiments, were Henri Edmond Cross,

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Albert Dubois-Pillet, Maximilian Luce, Charles Augrand and Hippolyte Petitjean.

The Neo-Impressionists, to quote Paul Signac, are like the Impressionists in having on their palettes only pure colors. But “they repudiate absolutely all mixing on the palette, except, of course, the mixing of colors that are contiguous upon the chromatic circle. The latter, graded to one another and cleared with white, will tend to reproduce the variety of the hues of the solar spectrum and all their tones. For example, an orange mingling with a yellow and a red, a violet graded toward red and toward blue, a green passing from blue to yellow, are with the white the sole elements which they employ. But by the optical mixing of these several pure colors, and by varying their proportions, they obtain an infinite quantity of hues, from the most intense to the most gray.” . . . “Each touch, taken pure from the palette, remains pure upon the canvas.” Thus the Neo-Impressionists “can claim to surpass in luminosity and color the Impressionists who sully and gray the pure colors of the simplified palette.”

They might have been more appropriately called “color luminists”; but adopted the other name to acknowledge their indebtedness to Impressionists who lead the way in the search for light and color. But, as M. Signac adds, while the Impressionists rely upon instinct and aim at fugitive or instantaneous effects, the Neo-Impressionists aim at permanence of effect and reach their results by reflection, based on scientific principles. “The Impressionist,” as M. Theodore Duret has said, “sits on the bank of a stream and paints what

## NEO-IMPRESSIONISM

passes before him." But the Neo-Impressionist, to quote M. Signac, "following in this aspect the counsels of Delacroix, will not commence a canvas until he has fixed upon the arrangement. Guided by tradition and science, he will harmonize the composition to his conception. That is to say, he will adapt the lines, their directions and angles, the dark and light of the tones and the hues to the character that he wishes shall prevail. The dominant lines will be horizontal to express calm; ascending for joy; and descending for sadness, while the intermediary lines will figure all the other sensations in their infinite variety. A polychrome play, not less expressive and diverse, is wedded to his play of line. To ascending lines will correspond warm hues and light tones; with descending lines cool hues and deep tones will predominate, while an equilibrium more or less perfect of warm and cool hues and of pale and intense tones will add to the calm of the horizontal. Thus submitting the color and line to the emotion that he has experienced, the painter will do the work of the poet, the creator."

In fact, however much instinct may affect the character of his sensations, the Neo-Impressionist will not permit it to affect his expression. The latter must be precisely organized; color as well as line being handled according to reasoned principles so as to secure a perfect harmony of *ensemble*. And the latter will correspond with a moral harmony in the artist's mind; the product of disciplined reasoning and organization. The artist as well as his work—the one in consequence of the other—rests upon the assurance of scientific basis.

In conclusion Signac reminds us that "division of

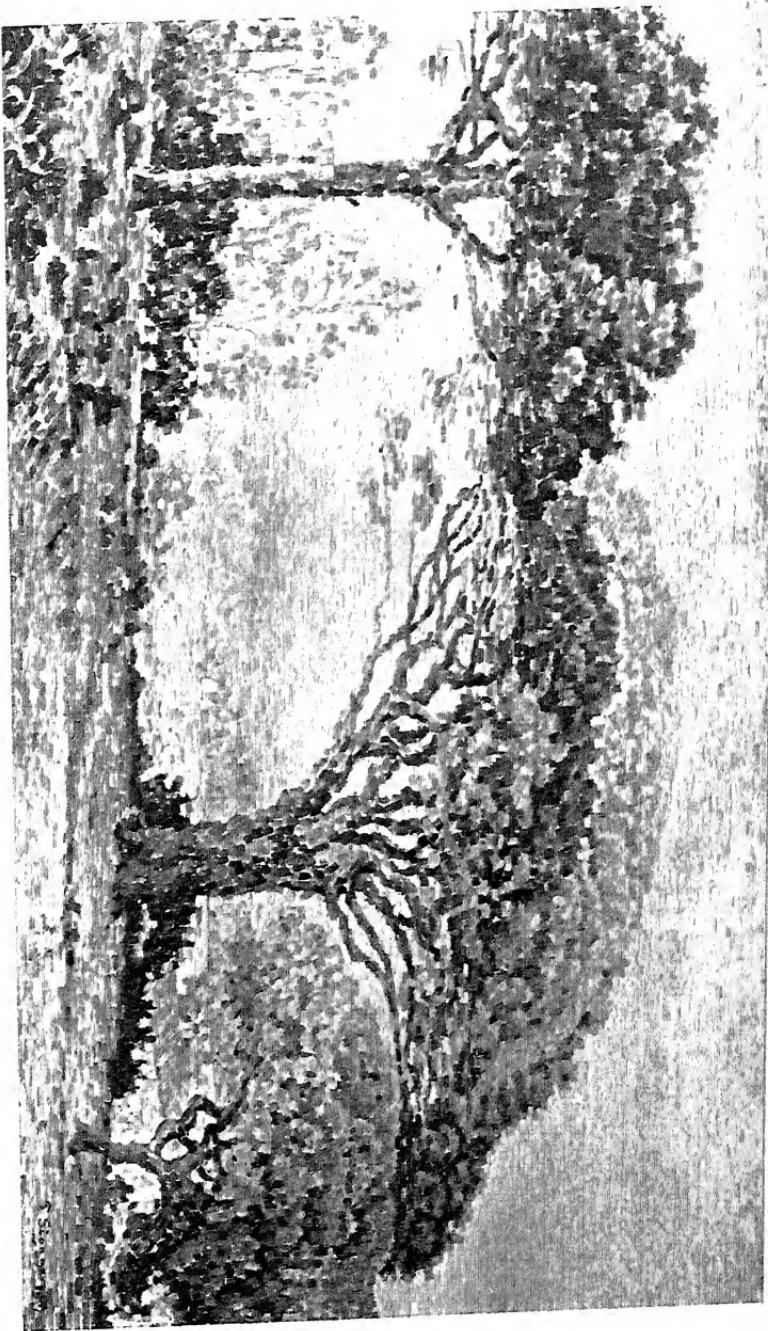
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"touch" is an esthetic principle, the touch itself being merely the means to an end. This warning is directed against the common error of supposing that it is the touch which constitutes the principle of Neo-Impressionism. But, except that the new school varies the size and character of the touch to the size and character of the composition, it is in no wise distinguished by the use of the touch. Delacroix's touch took the form of cross-hatches, some Impressionists adopted a comma-stroke; some have used the point and are the only ones to whom the term *pointilliste* is proper; others have adopted the square touch of a mosaic; Segantini wove his touches together side by side like stitches in wool-work. The touch, in fact, is no novelty of technique, and has no significance of principle.

Signac's book has been criticized because of its frequent reference to Delacroix, as if, says one critic very foolishly, the author imagined that the great Romanticist existed chiefly to supply an argument for Neo-Impressionism. This, of course, is mere trifling with the matter. Signac's obvious and excellent intention was to show the logical development of the new principles both from Impressionism and from Delacroix; and surely it is no detraction from the greatness of both that beside being potent in themselves they have proved to be sources of potency for further development.

The new principle has also been objected to as reducing the personality of its exponents. But this implies a very cursory or unfeeling study of the works of the several men. Nobody with any sympathy of appreciation could confuse the amplitude of feeling in

LANDSCAPE



PAUL SIGNAC

S. STEPHENSON



## NEO-IMPRESSIONISM

Seurat's scene of young men bathing, for example, with the exquisite delicacy of Signac's river landscapes; or overlook the differences displayed by Luce's street scenes of work-a-day life and by those of peasant life in the fields by Charles Augrand; or the color rhythm of Cross with the decorative canvases of nude nymphs by Petitjean.

Nor is the fact that by adopting the principles of Neo-Impressionism a mediocre painter can realize his mediocrity, an adverse argument. For such a charge could be brought against every *system* of technique; and it might as well be urged that systems of scientific instruction are fatal to the appearance of scientific genius. So far Neo-Impressionism has produced no artist of preponderating ability; but this is no argument against it. Owing to the reluctance of the public to commit itself until time and authority have served to endorse a new movement with respectability, the present exponents of Neo-Impressionism have perhaps scarcely had an opportunity to prove their full capacity. Signac is disposed to believe that the latter will only be rendered possible when they are given a chance to decorate large mural spaces, particularly in ill-lighted buildings. His surmise appears reasonable and, in view of what so often passes for decoration, the world could not be further wronged by putting the experiment to a test.

## CHAPTER XVI

### PENUMBRA

**S**O far in following the progress of modern French painting we have passed unnoticed many a quiet backwater where the artist has liberated his spirit in seclusion from the swift main stream. The present chapter, therefore, shall be in the nature of a retrospect, gathering up some of the personalities that the logic of events compelled us for the time to overlook.

The dominant features of the nineteenth century, scientific research and material progress, tended for a time toward rationalism, and materialism, to a belief in nothing that could not be submitted to the evidence of the senses. This attitude toward life was reflected, as we have seen, in the painter's attitude toward art. Romanticism, at least in its origin, had been an expression of soul. Naturalism and Impressionism, however, were to a great extent the products of that "chair and table" view of life which confines its interest to what can be seen and handled. A vast quantity of modern painting in France, as indeed elsewhere, presents a spectacle of the most barren materialism. Nor is this quality characteristic only of much naturalistic and impressionistic work; it is equally so, though in a different and perhaps less tolerable way, of a great deal of the



ÉMILE RENÉ MÉNARD

THE BATHERS



## PENUMBRA

academic output. In fact, if a visitor, arriving from another planet, were to base his estimate of modern civilization on the exhibits of picture galleries, he might easily be led to the conclusion that the modern man was without imagination and devoid of any conscious need of higher thinking and feeling. He would, of course, be mistaken, even misjudging the evidence of pictures. For the modern has exhibited his imagination in discovering beauty in things of common experience and has through his study of light and color subtilized, it is even proper to say spiritualized, his feeling for beauty. Still, in the main, he has limited his appreciation of beauty to the visible and tangible.

It is in contrast with this main tendency that the imagination of certain painters, conscious that reality is not solely an affair of eyesight, has penetrated beyond the palpable into the confines of the spiritual; into that penumbra where fact and faith join mysterious hands.

Some have introduced obscurity into their pictures, creating a physical penumbra in which the forms are partly merged; while all suggest a feeling, aloof from the stir of things in a sort of penumbra of the spirit. Jean Charles Cazin (1841–1900) in a measure represents both these phases, as well in his figure subjects as in his better-known landscapes. It is not obscurity in the sense of darkness that wraps his night scenes, twilights and moonlights. But the facts of things are slumbering, merged in the impression of the scene, as it affects the spirit. These village streets, and sandy dunes, quiet by day, become in the phantom half-light ghosts. And ghosts are impressive, as some one has

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said, because they are silent. It is the silence of these vacant spaces that so poignantly arrests one's spirit. A corresponding impressiveness characterizes his earlier subjects in which figures play important part; his Biblical scenes, for example, such as *Hagar and Ishmael in the Wilderness*; and also his modern figure studies. In one case the spirit of the scene, in the other the spirit of the individual, is detached from outside contact, alone with its own silence.

In a strain of elegant lyricism which unfortunately sometimes lapses into prettiness, Édouard Aman-Jean (1860—) renders the graceful forms of women, haunting the stillness of quiet gardens. He began with themes of legendary and historic lore, Jeanne d'Arc and St. Geneviève, and something of the mystic still lingers in his presentation of the modern Parisienne.

The works of René Ménard, born about 1858, are impregnated with a consciousness of the subtlety of beauty. The portrait of his uncle, the philosopher, Louis Ménard, in the Luxembourg, is that of a man whose eyes look beyond the evidence of the material and temporal with a gaze of strangely tender penetration. Meanwhile, Ménard's landscapes, with or without figures, present an alluring combination of objective nature with the subjective expression of a spirit that in its essence is Hellenic. Yet it is a modern spirit. The exquisite nudes, whose presence personifies the spirit of the mountains, lakes and trees are no mere Oreads and Dryads revivified. They are the living, palpitating abstractions of nature's loveliness as to-day we may know and feel it.

## PENUMBRA

The mystery latent in things very familiar has been explored by Henri Sidaner (1862—). He has become most characteristically identified with subjects in which still-life plays a chief part. The corner of a city garden, for example, shows a table spread with a white cloth and garnished with glass and silver, flowers and fruit. These reflect in a thousand nuances the warm glow of a rose-shaded lamp; the whole forming a jewel of tender radiance set in the pale uncertain luminosity of the moonlit garden. Sometimes it is the drear homeliness of a village street that the moonlight invests with tender poetry, or the outworn grandeur of a Venetian palace which in the soft *clair-obscur* palpitates with the melody of bygone memories.

Two artists of choice vision are Adolphe Monticelli (1824–1886) and Henri Fantin-Latour (1836–1904). Both loved music; Monticelli, the ravishing irresponsibility of gipsy music, while Fantin-Latour was among the first Frenchmen to appreciate Wagner and an enthusiastic devotee of Berlioz, Rossini and Brahms. During the days of the Third Empire Monticelli ruffled it bravely in Parisian life; but after the disasters of 1870 retired to Marseilles and lived a life of seclusion that to outsiders seemed pathetic. But he lived within himself a life which, while its mental basis may have been insecure and fantastical, was one of inspiration to his art. Just as he filled his consciousness with rich luxurious fantasies, so he peopled the spaces of his pictures. For Monticelli's impressionism differed radically in technique from the Manet type. He was not an embroiderer of surfaces, but a great space-con-

## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

structor, the builder of concaves whose limits merge in the infinite. And this without any use of grays or usual effects of penumbra. His colors burn like molten jewels, his light, whether moonlight or otherwise, does not pass into an aura of obscurity. The light passes into light, suggesting interminable vistas of mysterious pleasure. And these vistas, avenues and corridors of living light are thronged with votaries of joyousness, as real and yet as detached from ordinary reality as Watteau's gallants and their ladies. Substitute, however, for Watteau's exquisite logic, typically French, the passionate rhythms and harmonies so purely those of instinct, which characterize Hungarian gipsy music, and you begin to account for the exceptional phenomenon of Monticelli.

Fantin-Latour owed much to the example of Ingres. Acting upon his own choiceness of temperament it tempered to fineness the naturalistic motive which he shared with others of his day. His *Portrait of Manet* (p. 193) exhibits the intimacy of his feeling and simple directness of treatment; but it scarcely reveals that deeper penetration of the subject's personality and the capacity to place him aloof in an intimate atmosphere of his own which characterizes Fantin-Latour's best portraits. Of these there is none finer than the *Portrait of Edwin Edwards and his Wife* in the National Gallery. The man sits absorbed in the study of a print, the lady, standing beside him with folded arms, has lifted her gaze from the work of art and fixes it on a far vision. Around the two figures is an aura of highly refined abstraction. This picture is the work of an





PORTRAIT OF ÉDOUARD MANET

ART INSTITUTE, CHICAGO

HENRI FANTIN-LATOUR

## PENUMBRA

artist whose temperament led him not only to a fine conception of his subject but also involved a quiet directness that enabled him to realize the conception simply yet fully. The same happy union of conception and achievement characterizes those figure-subjects which were inspired by his love of music. Some were executed in pastel, more by lithography; the latter medium helping him technically, since the grain of the stone served to break up the surfaces, which, when he handled paint, were rather inclined to tightness. But in these groups of nude and draped figures, the lights scintillate and the shadows are lustrous; the surfaces tremble and glow in the variety of rhythmic and melodious movement. These exquisite interpretations of the very spirit of dance and music are touched with the dignity of Ingres and the naïve grace of Prud'hon, while they vibrate to the naturalness of Fantin-Latour's own mingled joyousness and seriousness of temperament.

It was under the shadow of Rembrandt that Eugène Carrière (1849–1906) matured. As a young man he had come under the spell of Rubens and Velasquez and his earlier pictures are distinguished by a delicate manipulation of blues, rose and pale yellow, harmonized with neutral browns and grays. Gradually his color scheme became more austere, until he developed his matured style, which floats the light and shade in an embrowned penumbra, while out of it emerge those parts of the forms which are essential to interpret the expression. The subjects become variations on the theme of *Maternity*, with occasional portraits and religious pictures, such as the *Crucifixion* of the Luxem-

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bourg. One and all are impregnated with profoundly reverential tenderness, a reflection of the artist's own moral beauty of character, which so deeply endeared him to his intimate friends. Notwithstanding the spiritualized atmosphere, there is no lack of plasticity in such parts of the figures as are revealed. There is no evasion of form but a control of it, so as to subordinate the mere facts to expression. It is his feeling regarding the subject that Carrière was bent upon interpreting.



MATERNITÉ

EUGÈNE CARRIÈRE



## CHAPTER XVII

PUVIS DE CHAVANNES

PIERRE PUVIS DE CHAVANNES is the most impressive figure of the last quarter of the century. In an age of flux and agitated sensations he pursued with steady persistence the goal to which his instinct and his reason alike impelled him, and eventually dominated by sheer quietude of force. He resumed the great decorative traditions of the eighteenth century; but, passing over Rubens and the masters of the High Renaissance, drew inspiration from the primitive Florentine artists, from Giotto in particular. Yet impressionism, in the broad sense of the term, also affected him. His decorations are impressions and expressions, relying upon the eloquence of suggestion.

The student should begin his study of Puvis, if possible, by a visit to the Museum of Amiens. Here, alongside of later panels, may be seen the early examples, *War* and *Peace*. In these, already, Puvis reveals himself an artist of ideas, of imagination, not building up a composition which is empty of meaning or one which relies for its interests upon incident. It is the soul of War and Peace that he interprets: the horror of the one in its brutalizing of the conqueror and its wreaking of misery on the innocent and helpless; the blessedness

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of the other in promoting the possibility of fullest harmony between humanity and nature. Each canvas presents incidents, but they are dominated by the embracing idea. It is the idea that, as far as the subject is concerned, absorbs one's imagination.

But as yet the technical method contradicts the abstraction of the subject. The treatment is pictorial and the eye gradually roams to and lingers on fragments of superlative interest. Puvis was still working in the manner of many others who have covered the walls of the Pantheon and other public buildings with illustrations.

But Puvis' instinct divined the fact that, since architecture is the most abstract of the fine arts, the others when they coöperate with it should partake of its abstraction. It has become a shibboleth of the decorators that the space must be treated in subordination to the surrounding architecture. But this, after all, is little more than a maxim of architectonic good manners, which, by the way, was violated freely by the Italians when it suited them. Nor will the sole regard for architectonic propriety succeed in effecting the harmony between painting and building that is attained by Puvis. His art rested on a profound principle: that of the genius of abstract expression. In an age, so dominated by the concrete as his own and ours, it offered a means of emphasizing the claims of the spirit.

In order to achieve this abstraction Puvis submitted himself to a severe discipline of elimination, which should reduce the concrete, as far as possible, to its essential elements and sacrifice the representative quality of form



PIERRE PUVIS DE CHAVANNES

MUSEUM OF LILLE

INTER ARTES ET NATURAM



## PUVIS DE CHAVANNES

in favor of its more significant qualities of expression. He was influenced thereto by the example of Giotto, whose simplification, whether it resulted from a large dramatic sense or from inability to carry the drawing farther, is so admirably decorative and full of character. Puvis, in emulating this, had to divest himself of the habit of treating the figures as prescribed by the schools. It is sometimes said that he had to unlearn what he knew; but the truer way of putting it is to say that he had to learn the higher principles of drawing, such as Daumier, Millet and Degas proclaimed, which simplifies the masses by omission of unessentials. They adopted this principle in pursuit of character of expression in the figures. Puvis carried it still further in order to reduce the individual characterization of the figures in favor of a complete balance of harmoniously abstract relation between the figures and their surroundings. For with Puvis the landscape is not incidental or subordinated to the figures; it is rather the orchestration to which the figures are contributing not separate melodies but a united chorale. Hence the figures have become static; scarcely more animated than the trees, yet by the suggestion of their human forms yielding a poignancy of expression. There is a French saying to the effect that solitude is beautiful when there is some one present to whom we can say, "How beautiful is solitude." This is somewhat the rôle played by the figures in Puvis' as in Corot's landscapes. They intensify the sense of universal harmony in this vision of the solitude of the spirit.

Regarded from the point of view of both learned

## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

plane-construction and of expression, Puvis comes near to being the greatest landscape artist of the century. The element in his work which determines its high quality is his extraordinary sense of the value of open spaces. We do not find it in his early work. His *Peace* is beautiful, but with a confined beauty that draws us in upon the figures; which are not only fully modeled but grouped in masses that show one form against another. Compare with this any of his later work, and we find the grouping loosened out so that the figures are more distributed and take their place independently in the increased depth and number of the planes. But, even so, the final technical secret of the abstraction which pervades the whole, drawing all together into a vast spiritual harmony, is the extent of the *open* spaces. You can assure yourself of this by a visit to the Pantheon where his *Cycle of Ste. Geneviève* can be compared with the pictorial and illustrative mural embellishments of diverse famous artists who are deficient in the decorative sense but still more in the quality of abstraction. Study, for example, that expanse of violet night-sky which makes up half the composition of *Ste. Geneviève looking over Paris*. Its very emptiness leaves uninterrupted roaming-space for your imaginings as for those of the sainted maiden. It links her quiet spirit, as it may one's own, with the mystery of infinite calm.

It is to be noticed that as a rule it is only in his skies that Puvis allows himself the use of pure color. One might imagine that he first chose the beautiful hue of

## PUVIS DE CHAVANNES

the blue and then attuned all the other colors to it. They have yielded up their positiveness. The verdure and foliage are a pale green, the ground has faded to brownish gray, against which the flesh tints show a slightly lower tone of the same hue. For it was a habit of Puvis to set his figures against a background of slightly higher key. While his colors are thus decolorized, they are subtilized by the number of tones which each hue presents. The process corresponds to the dematerializing of the facts and contributes to the abstraction and spiritualized harmony of the *ensemble*. It may be that at times Puvis carried the decolorization as well as the dematerialization of his figures too far; that the colors become a trifle beggared, the forms a little incoherent in their lack of "drawing." One possibly is conscious of this in some of his panels in the Boston Public Library, which represent the work of his declining years, and in certain of the smaller detached panel easel-pictures. If so, it is but necessary to turn to his *Geneviève* cycle, or to *Winter* in the Hotel de Ville, Paris, or to the hemicycle of the Sorbonne, or *Inter Artes et Naturam*, and not alone to these, to realize the genius of this modern master.

Wherein lies its magic? Possibly in its direct out-growth from the spirit of the time, which in turn it lifted higher, turning its own weakness into strength. For his age was marked, not only by a yearning after some spiritual escape from the jungle of materialism, but also by an overwrought sensibility that rejected the obvious and sought for the most subtle sensations.

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Out of this virtual decadence of his time Puvis constructed visions of spiritual refreshment.

So far as there is a successor to Puvis de Chavannes, it is Maurice Denis (1885—). He has been influenced by the older man, but has applied in his own way the principles of abstraction, space-composition and color. He is himself a lover of the primitive Florentines, and was attracted, it is said, particularly by Lorenzo di Credi. He differs from Puvis as youth from age. It is the glamour of time and wisdom that haunts the work of the one; the miracle of the soul's eternal freshness that enchants us in the other. And Denis is possessed of that blithe instinctive piety which characterizes the French race in general. At Le Vesinet, between his home at St. Germain and Paris, he has decorated two chapels in the church of Les Ortes and the chapel of the St. Croix institution for girls. An exquisite simplicity of sentiment allied to a consummate skill in the logical decorative effects characterize these expressions of radiant and joyous faith.

Can I ever forget my first introduction to the work of Denis? It was after a long and weary traversing of the galleries of the Salon, when one was sated with the plethora of profitable and unprofitable canvases, jostling one another in their eagerness to attract. When lo! a step and in the entrance to a gallery, set apart for the work of one man, one had passed into a new world. It was one in which springtime never ends; in which youth and fragrant hope and purity bloom continually. The lawns are fresh with vernal greens,

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starred with the gaiety of flowers. Peach and apple trees spread their gauzy veils of pink and white against the blue of an eternally cloudless sky. Maidens with soft budding forms and draperies that reflect the hues of the blossoms, shaded with lilac, stand or recline in groups, intercepting the clarity of the light with transparent violet shadows. They are knit to one another and to their surrounding in a naïve harmony of untroubled happiness and artless love.

Such are the aspect and expression that characterize the work of Denis, though he will sometimes introduce colors of greater warmth and positiveness, as, for instance, in the chapel of the Sacred Heart in Les Ortes, where the sky is rainbow-hued with a predominance of rich orange, melting into yellow. In his use of color he has this much of neo-impressionism, that he uses the hues pure and vitalizes them with tenderly discriminated tones. While still preserving the abstraction of his figures, he treats them with more roundness of modeling and simple naturalness of gesture and expression than are revealed in those of Puvis. Moreover, he differs from the latter in garnishing more the empty spaces. His are not empty in the more literal sense that those of Puvis are; the result in expression being that, while the latter's have the abstraction of a far vision, Denis' are naïve and intimate.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### LA FIN DE SIÈCLE

EVEN before the last quarter of the century had set in the world was conscious of a mood of spirit which it eventually characterized as *fin de siècle*. It was compounded of negation and pessimism with resultant mocking and contempt; and of lust of sensation, brutal and bizarre, on the one hand, as the product of gross and brutal naturalism; on the other, in the way of retaliation, overwrought with refinement and the appetite for exotic stimulus.

It commenced in a subtle epicureanism of taste which found its literary expression in J. K. Huysmans' "À Rebours" and Flaubert's "Salammbo." The hero of Huysmans' novel is a typical decadent. His taste has been so exquisitely exacting that he shuts himself from the world in a paradise of his own sensations. He has a mystical faith in a future which will arrive when the present civilization is annihilated. He has ceased to strive because he has found no ideal worth his pains and is, moreover, conscious of his own impotence. In women he is attracted not by strong and healthy beauty and fitness for maternity, but by the fascination of the over-ripe and the morbid. His favorites among authors are Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarme, Villiers and the Goncourts. He accepts from the last named the definition

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of beauty as that which uneducated people regard with instinctive distaste. In the matter of painters he limits his choice to Odilon Redon and Gustave Moreau.

Redon (1840–1904) has been called the French Blake, but such mysticism as he exhibited is of the surface quality, not the actual life of the spirit, as it was with the English artist. Redon has more affinity in his imagination with Edgar Allan Poe, who is the subject of one of his lithographs. He was, as Meier-Graefe says, compounded of all imaginable ghost stories, or rather ghost fragments, for it is in fragments that his art is finest. His drawing, for example, of *Beatrice*, the head and shoulders, is most sensitive in its tenderly impalpable modeling and correspondingly exquisite in expression. It is in drawings and lithographs that his genius was best displayed, and an exhibition of them in 1881, aided by the pronouncements of Huysmans, made him famous and for a time the center of a cult of mysticism. Twenty years later he reappeared before the public with an exhibition of pastels from which, to quote again Meier-Graefe, all compositional intention was rigidly excluded. There are no lines, no planes; a shimmer of specks stream over the canvas like flowers of strangely material colors, compounded of gold, silver, gems and the black of rare butterflies; in splendor comparable to certain early Japanese cabinets inlaid with mother-of-pearl. They represent an “excellent trifling,” which betrayed that Redon had succumbed to the incoherence of the times and his own increasing years.

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Less the artist than Redon but surpassing him in vogue was Gustave Moreau (1826–1898). Directly inspired by Flaubert and praised extravagantly by Huysmans, he passed in his time for a symbolist. This was because he drew his subjects from myths and legends and the Bible stories, connecting them in groups which he called “The Cycle of Man,” “The Cycle of Woman,” “The Cycle of the Lyre” and “The Cycle of Death.” But in his habit of crowding his compositions with enrichments of still-life detail, derived from German, Italian, and Persian art, he proved himself at heart a naturalist. It is the word-genre of “Salâmmbo,” adapted to paint, that characterizes his style, which depends upon and appeals to sense and involves little or no spiritual suggestion. The large watercolor, *The Apparition* (p. 207), now in the Louvre, is regarded as his masterpiece and is fairly typical of the character and method of his work. The technique is lacking both in sweep and *esprit*, involving an elaborate mosaic of minute bits. Originally the effect may have been lustrous and jewel-like. To-day it is tame and spiritless in color.

. . . . .

How the temper of the time found expression in spiritualized refinement has been illustrated in another chapter. Here it is rather its mundane and material phases that occupy attention. Typical of these in the best sense, has been Paul Albert Besnard (1849—). He is one to whom the unusual is abhorrent. He has dipped into the exotic as mirrored in Southern sunshine and Oriental types of femininity. All flesh be-



DECORATION

MAURICE DENIS



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comes to him constructed masses of plasticity and movement on which colored luminosity may play in response to the magic of his subtle and ardent imagination. He finds his motive equally in the glossy quarters of a kicking pony, annoyed by flies; in sleeping and crouching nudes, as in the woman illumined by firelight, *Femme qui se Chauffe*, of the Luxembourg, or in the sporting torsos and limbs of young girls plashing beneath a waterfall. He extends his *bizarnerie* of vision to the portrayal of the nervous elegance of women of society or the voluptuous liveliness of a Réjane. But, if we except his decorations in the Chemical Laboratory of the Sorbonne, where the over-straining forms writhe in a welter of putrescent color, his vigorous mentality and executive ability in handling the brush have saved his painting from at least the weakness of decadence.

One can scarcely say the same of Gaston La Touche (1854—). The blatancy and banality of an age of mushroom millionaires and diamond Kaffir kings is reflected in the decorative orgies of his canvases, where men and women are steeped in an iridescent slough of self-indulgence, extravagance and lasciviousness in the company of satyrs and monkeys. Yet his shallow and vulgar art has been rewarded with a gold medal at one of the most important exhibitions in the United States! Judged, however, by the traditions of his race, he is a distant connection of Watteau, who has debased the latter's art to a more or less tipsy debauche.

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Above the confusion of tongues, accompanying the revolt of individualism against the time-honored restrictions imposed by official art and public morality, one cry resounds: the horror of the conventional! We have seen how it led Puvis back to the example of the Primitives; and that he reduced from it an organized science of decoration which suited his own temperament and what he felt to be the spiritual need of the time. Others have been led farther back than Florence of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and mostly without discovering for themselves any organized system of art. A forerunner of this backward movement was Paul Gauguin (1851-1903). A Breton on his father's side, with a strain of Peruvian on the mother's, he worked for a time in Brittany, gathering followers around him in what was called the School of Pont-Aven. Eventually the exoticism in his blood drew him to the island of Tahiti where the remainder of his life was spent. He found his models in the copper-skinned natives. They resemble those of Samoa, whose figures and simple grace of life represented to John La Farge the nearest approach in the modern world to what he conceived of the old world of Hellas.

These Tahitians, whose nudity was almost complete, Gauguin painted in poses that recall the immobility and profound calm of Egyptian sculpture, against a background of vivid green tropical verdure, ruddy sands and cliffs and the azure of sky and sea, or the deep *lapis lazuli* or purple blue of shaded pools and waterfalls. To Gauguin, sick of what he called the





THE APPARITION

LUXEMBOURG

GUSTAVE MOREAU

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“disease of civilization,” the “barbarism of this new world,” he declared, “was a restoration to health.” It was the “realization of his dreams”—“a foretaste of Nirvana.” Strindberg had been shocked by the “Eve that dwelt in this Eden.” Gauguin replied: “Only the Eve I have painted can stand naked before us. Yours would always be shameless in this natural state.” Gauguin’s feeling for “barbarism” has been misinterpreted by many younger painters whom he influenced.

Meanwhile, there is another artist whose influence has also gone awry. It is Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1865–1901). An accident in childhood had robbed the lower part of his body of vitality, while his brain was one of singular acuteness and his appetite for life as keen. Degas and Forain attracted him chiefly, but he was a natural artist and quickly discovered his own *métier* and method. In paintings and pastel, but most decisively in lithographs, he exhibits an exquisite sense of design and nervous, vibrating color and an incisive use of line, now strong, now delicate, but invariably expressive in the highest degree. With this technique that thrilled with the nervosity of the time, he depicted fragments of the Vie Parisienne, as displayed on the turf, in the hospitals, café-concerts, bal-publics and bagnios. The grossness of many of his subjects become transfigured by the exquisiteness of his art. Accordingly the latter lent a cachet to the subject, stimulating its vogue. Other men, who found his art inimitable, could emulate his choice of subject. Hence Toulouse-Lautrec, like Gauguin, though the latter has little of his consummate artistry, has had a

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share in promoting the particular form of decadence that characterizes much of the painting of the new century.

The significant feature that is common to its otherwise variable manifestations consists of an abnormal horror of everything that passes current for propriety in society as at present constituted. It not only recognizes, as every thinking person does, that society is suffering on the one hand from a deep-seated disease of hypocrisy and false standards and on the other from a brutal callousness to consequences so long as its own materialism can be indulged. But it also imitates this very brutality and in the frenzy of its pessimism would overturn all existing conventions, heedless of the fact that conventions must exist for the preservation as well of art as of society, nay, of life itself, whether physical, mental or spiritual. "Down with everything that is up!" This is its insensate cry against that which art has sanctified and the conscience of the world holds sacred. It raves most madly against beauty, as beauty has heretofore been conceived alike by artists and by man's yearning after betterment. It sweeps aside all culture and extols the most primitive sexual instincts. It degrades the human body from its place in art as the high symbol of imagined physical and spiritual harmony and represents it as a crude fleshly organism, now gross and torpid and now contorted with the spasms of animal desires.

In thus flaunting the red rag of anarchy some of these men may be actuated by the malicious enjoyment



PORTRAIT OF MILE. RÉJANE

PAUL ALBERT BESNARD



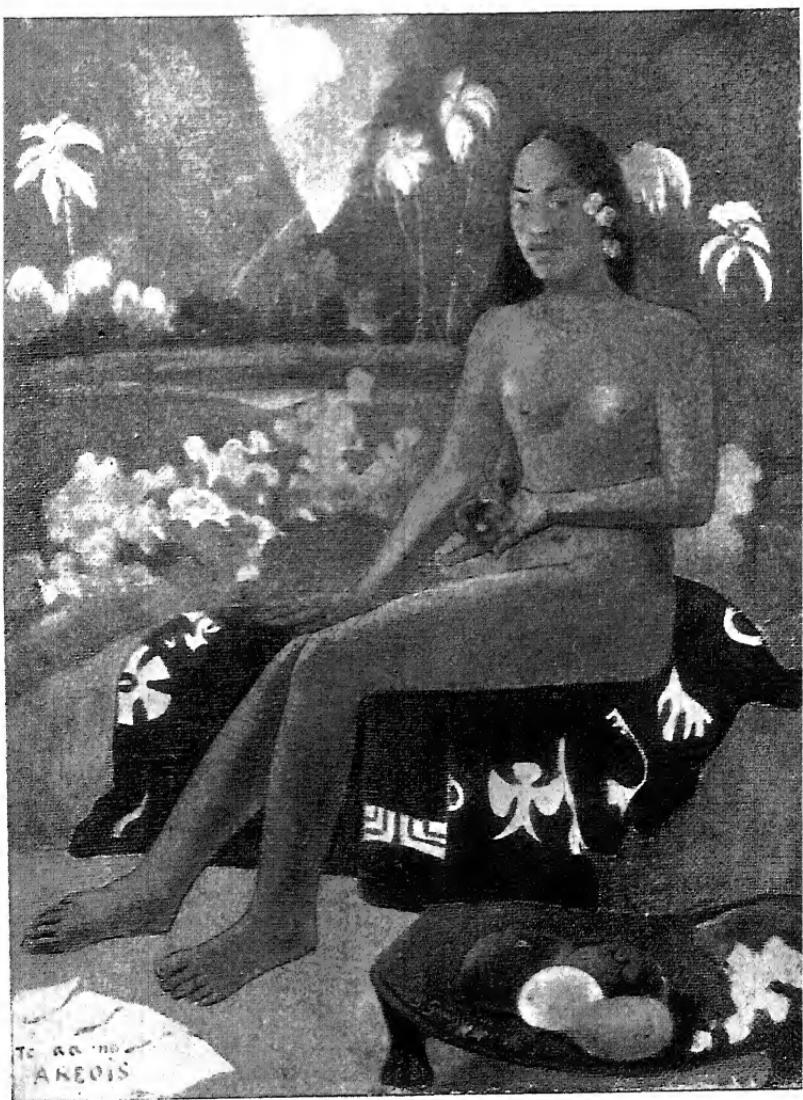
## LA FIN DE SIÈCLE

of outraging the philistine bourgeois; but the majority seem to be sincere in the belief that out of this chaos of violated decencies an era of higher artistic purity will ensue. Meanwhile, let us note that it is reflecting elements in the modern social system that have no parallel in history and can only be partially compared to the excesses of the degenerate Roman Empire. The world's rapid increase of wealth has changed the standards of society. War to-day is seldom conducted by generals and their armies but is being waged perpetually by financiers and their hordes of parasites. It has been a war to death, directed against private rights, crushing down all opposition and resulting in a power so nearly absolute that the old standards of right and wrong and the old safeguards against their violation have been swept away. The spirit it has engendered is one of cynical contempt for humanity and decency. It is assumed, and with much reasonableness, that all men and women have their price and are eager to sell themselves; the highest rewards are not for noble lives but for success; and the kind of intellect extolled is that which is characterized by audacity, unscrupulousness, ferocity and cunning. It is to intellects of this caliber that half the world to-day crawls in abject admiration. In place of the Goddess of Reason the revolutionaries of this later century have set up the Moloch of Success, whose creed is lust of power and a cynical reliance upon brute force. It is this social and economic "Terror" that the Robespierres and the Marats of modern painting have emulated.

What is to be the end? Already the social and eco-

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nomic revolution is showing signs of abatement, and reorganization is in process of being effected. Will a corresponding reorganization be evolved from the present chaos of painting? This is the question that particularly centers around the work of Henri Matisse.



TAHITI

PAUL GAUGUIN



## CHAPTER XIX

HENRI MATISSE

**H**ENRI MATISSE (1862—) has come to be regarded, by outsiders at any rate, as a leader of this movement of “Wild Men,” partly through the number of his pupils, partly through the clear enunciation of what he believes to be the principles involved. These he explains as “simplification, organization and expression.” That he may have derived this triune motive from Cézanne, of whom we have yet to speak, does not alter the fact that Matisse has been their chief spokesman.

The ideas embedded in this phrase are individually not new. If there is any novelty it is in bringing them into such concise and effective unity. It is a fact, moreover, that they are practically identical with the principles which are being relied upon to reorganize the social and economic conditions. Substitute for expression the economic equivalent, efficiency, and you have the secret by which the barons of finance and industry have acquired their bloated power, and by which alone their power can be checked in the interest of the public. For the system embodied in the ideas has come to stay; and the problem which confronts the statesmen of the present time is not to overthrow the results of trust-combination, but to discover how the benefits of

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efficiency as the result of simplifying and organizing production can be extended from the strong-boxes of the few to the well-being of the many.

The ideas, in fact, are so intrinsically a part of the great movements of the day that Matisse's advocacy of them in relation to painting must needs command attention. As *a priori* propositions they are immediately acceptable. The test in his own case consists in his application of them. Let us realize at the outset that he inherits from impressionism the decorative intention of a canvas. When it came to simplification he seems to have argued that he must divest himself as far as possible of his original academic training; he must get back of all acquired learning, whether derived from Italy or Greece; and must try to look at nature through the eyes of the primitive artist who had nothing but instinct to rely on. So he took counsel of the carved wooden images of aboriginal Africans.

Such organization as these exhibited was an instinctive recognition of certain rude relationships; for example, the connection and difference between the advanced planes of the nose and the retiring hollows of the eye-sockets; between the chunky surfaces of the cheeks and the angular incision that indicated the mouth.

When it came to the question of expression, Matisse performed the feat of auto-suggestion, which discovered what he was looking for in the thing in which he had made up his mind it was to be found.

One point, however, he overlooked. The primitive man shared Matisse's instincts as a decorator, but was





STUDY OF A WOMAN

HENRI MATISSE

IN THE COLLECTION OF MR. LOUIS STEIN

## HENRI MATISSE

entirely unbothered by acquired ideals of harmony and rhythm. He transfigured a block of wood into his vision of nature and was satisfied. Not so the modern man. Accordingly Matisse, in his need to secure an absolutely harmonious and rhythmic arabesque to his compositions, has found it necessary to ignore his vision of nature. In a certain picture, for example, one of the woman's legs "came out" longer and bigger than the other. It was regrettable; Matisse admitted his temporary failure; but to have reorganized the legs on a basis of natural observation would have interfered with the harmony and rhythm of the whole.

Is this a pose, people ask, or simply foolishness? Apparently neither; but the result of a quite naïve instinct that compels him to push on, no matter how he stumble. Moreover, he is possibly less shocked by the violation of form, because it is not form but the expression inherent in the movement of form which he desires to render. He and all the new men have this at least in common: that they are sick of the photographic side of modern painting; the outcome of naturalism and impressionism, satisfied to give the actual appearance of an object. They affirm, with truth, that the camera has invaded this field and is capable of thoroughly exploring it; that the painter, if he is to recover an exclusive territory for his art, must push those means at his disposal in which the camera cannot emulate him. He must carry simplification beyond the camera's limited capacity to simplify and must rely especially upon that which is absolutely outside the camera's ability, namely, organization. Thus

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he leaves photography to play with the representation of form, while he, like El Greco, will subordinate, and if necessary, sacrifice or violate, form for the sake of the supreme end—expression.

Now to most people El Greco is insufferable. They don't like him and don't wish to; for he upsets their cherished maxim that a spade should resemble a spade. However, until you have not only appreciated what El Greco set out to do but are also enthusiastic over his achievement, you cannot begin to be in a position to study Matisse and many other moderns sympathetically, much less understandingly. For Matisse is no more a freak or a crazy man than was El Greco. But there is this great difference between their motives. The Toledan artist's instinct was religious; and his expression spiritual; while the expression and instinct of Matisse are alike governed by the senses.

In the summer of 1910 I found him in his country studio working upon two large decorations, *Dance* and *Music*, for a private house in Russia. Each composition involved a group of nudes seen upon a grassy summit, partly against the sky. The latter was blue; the grass a lively green and the figures vermilion; the pigments being pure from the tubes, except for some mixing of white to render the variety of tones.

This choice of color scheme may have been suggested by the frequency with which it occurs in Russian pictures, where the landscape is quite usually enlivened by a red barn. The use of the vermilion for the figures occasions the eye a temporary shock, but reason suggests that it is only pushing some degrees further

## HENRI MATISSE

the decorative convention of Puyis, who rendered his flesh colors in slightly lower tone than that of the reddish-brown ground. The effect, however, in Matisse's canvas is barbaric, which may well have been the artist's intention, and assists the primitive, elemental, one might almost say rudimentary, expression of the whole. For the rhythms of these dancing figures are those of instinct and nature. Matisse explains that he derived inspiration for them from watching the soldiers and *ouvriers* dancing with their sweethearts at the *Moulin des Galettes*; and added that the ballet at the opera interested him but was too artificial; in fact too *organisé*. He searches for the natural impression and then does the organizing for himself. And in the case of the *Dance*, organization and simplification were schemed to produce an expression of purely physical abandonment of lusty forms to sense intoxication. Contrasted with the dynamic delirium of this canvas was the static character of the *Music* panel. A nude youth stood erect playing a violin, the tension of his body as taut and vibrating as that of the strings. Beside him was seated a woman playing upon two pipes, the fluting freedom of the music being remarkably echoed in the mobile, willowy arabesque of the figure's torso and limbs. There was also a man who sang. His limbs were gathered up close to his body very much in the attitude of a jumper, while through the wide opening of the mouth his whole nature seemed to be draining out. There were other figures, but the above are sufficiently suggestive of the abstract character of the conception and treatment. I understand

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that they have been changed, in order to approach more nearly the movement of the other canvas.

This seems to me significant, for the *Dance* was animal in feeling, compared with the subtlety of expression of the *Music*. It suggests that the bias of Matisse's imagination is physical; that it is deficient in the finer qualities. Even on the physical side he is *gourmand* rather than *gourmet*. In his technique he does not exhibit the Frenchman's sense of craftsmanship; his surfaces and contours are as uncouth as those of his African wood carvings.

To a considerable extent this is probably intentional, a means of discouraging the eye from dwelling upon externals and of drawing the imagination to the inner movement of the forms. Yet, if so, the purpose is but a part of the sophistication which seems to be the worm i' the bud of Matisse's art. Perhaps inevitably; for a man trained in the traditions cannot strip himself naked of memories and experiences and profess to consort with aborigines without being conscious of a pose and without to some extent becoming a victim to it. But he is still in the vigor of his life; and may yet abandon the rôle of a protester and theorizer and follow implicitly and naturally the call of his instinct; not the instinct that he has tried to pare down to that of a primitive wood-cutter, but his own.

## CHAPTER XX

PAUL CÉZANNE

**I**N a letter dated a year or so before his death Cézanne wrote: "I am too old; I have not realized; I shall not realize now. I remain the primitive of the way which I have discovered." What the way was is summarized by his artist-friend, Émile Bernard, as "a bridge, thrown across conventional routine, by which impressionism may return to the Louvre and to the life profound."

Cézanne was born at Aix in Provence in 1839. Among his college friends was Zola with whom he shared a taste for literature and entered into rivalry in prose and poetic compositions. It was not until he visited Paris and was introduced by Zola to Courbet and Manet that his thoughts turned to painting. Soon, in favor of the latter, he renounced all other interests and settled down to that concentrated and patient study of nature and art which dominated the remainder of his life.

He passed through a period of absorbing the influence of others; by turns Delacroix, Daumier, Courbet and finally Manet, among whose followers he figured for a time conspicuously. Then he grew dissatisfied with impressionism and retired to Aix to prosecute his studies in seclusion. He ceased to exhibit and Paris

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had forgotten his existence, when in 1899 a number of his pictures appeared in the sale of his friend, M. Choquet's, collection. From this event dated his present reputation and the influence which he has exerted on Matisse and the still younger painters, who call him reverently, the Sage. He died at Aix in 1905.

Cézanne's dissent from impressionism grew out of what he believed to be its two deficiencies. One anticipated the later development of neo-impressionism, in so far as the latter has tried to substitute scientific certainty for "instinct" and "inspiration." The other was a reaction from the flat arabesques of impressionism to a more constructive kind of composition; which should replace the fugitive effects with those of bulk and permanence. Impressionism was too much at the mercy of temperament, too preoccupied with the merely passing show. Hence its manifest inferiority to the great art of the past.

On the other hand the latter ceased to be a living expression with the passing of the life to which it had responded and the academic, classicalized attempt to perpetuate it artificially has resulted in "conventional routine." It was over this routine that Cézanne set himself to build a bridge, which should unite the throbbing life of to-day with the noble art of the past, and let some of the profound life of Classic art pass across into the art of the present.

No one will dispute the grandeur of the aim or the need of achieving it, if modern painting is ever to take rank not only with the great art of the past but also

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with the great works of the present in other departments of civilization.

Cézanne recognized that modern painting in its effort to recover greatness was debarred for the most part from one source of Italian grandeur. It could no longer ally itself to the sumptuousness of that life and reinforce itself with the superb illustration of Biblical and mythological lore. It was compelled to be the expression of a life whose main characteristic is a keen consciousness of actualities. The painter of to-day cannot soar into the clouds; he must occupy himself with the actual perceptions of things as they are. He can, however, save himself from banality by relying upon his sensations, aroused by the perceptions, and by giving to them a concrete form. This, in fact, was what impressionism had done.

How was it possible to alleviate the oppression of concreteness and increase the suggestion of the abstract sensations; to reduce the appeal to the eye and magnify the claim on the imagination?

Cézanne attacked the problem intellectually; taking account of the psychology of perceptions and analyzing them with the untiring scrutiny of the scientist. He reasoned, for example, that to move the spectator deeply the artist must have recourse to depth. In place of the flat arabesques of the impressionists he revived the concavities of composition. Further, he rejected the elements of form in flat geometrical designs, the triangle, rectangle and circle, in favor of the rounded forms, the cone, cylinder and sphere. He also adopted as an axiom that all forms in nature create a

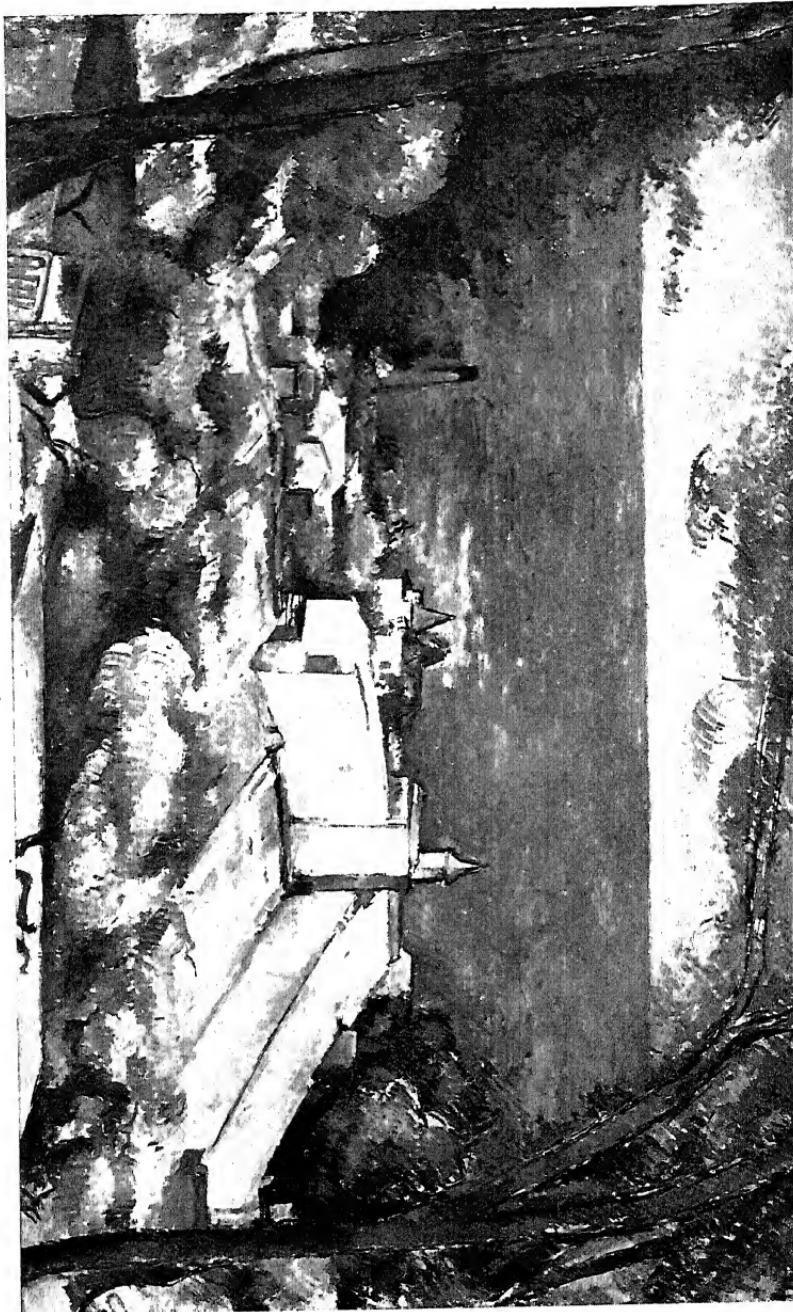
## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

sensation of revolving upon themselves and around a point in space.

In his analytical experiments with color Cézanne ran the gamut from dark to light. He early broke away from the impressionist's slavish adherence to the perceptions of color. It was the sensations excited by the perceptions that he aimed to render. Thus, in his early still-life pictures he would make his shadows in some cases as black as ink; and in his later figure-subjects never hesitate to throw up the roundness of a form by a dark line, that to the out-and-out impressionist is a horrible violation of nature's truth. And yet the amazing thing is that the net result in Cézanne impresses us by its fidelity to nature.

One may see a number of his figure-subjects in the collection of M. Pellerin and at the gallery of M. Vollard, a dealer whose rare instinct anticipated the genuine recognition of Cézanne's artistic significance. A few models have served him for his experiments, and they are placed against a slaty-gray background in clothes that chiefly repeat black, gray and dull blue. These and the flesh tints make up the color schemes. But, when you come to examine the quality of these hues, you find them threaded through and through with variety of hue and tone. His grays, for example, are a blend of rose and blue, often interspersed with yellow; a bloom of soft deep coloring, velvety in texture. The flesh tints are correspondingly complex, resulting in a texture as firm, colorful and luscious as fruit. Yet the faces are impassive and the figures uncouth, like roughly

Landscape



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hewn chunks of form. The expression is in the eyes and hands which echo each other with an extraordinary unity of feeling that yet always allows predominance of accent to the head.

Allusion has been made to Cézanne's pictures of still-life which in beauty of color and grandeur of feeling have probably never been surpassed. His landscapes, while commandingly natural, arouse sensations profoundly abstract. His groups of nudes in the open air, many of which suggest that he was acquainted with El Greco's art, sacrifice truth of form to the greater significance of movement. Viewed abstractly as symbols, the compositions are highly impressive, their expression mysteriously entrancing.

In later work the influence of the southern sunshine is apparent. The positiveness of the colors becomes resolved in the circumambience of light; until in his water-colors, the unpremeditated analysis of a temporary perception, the merest washes, almost colorless, suggest the sensation of constructed planes of level land and mountains. Anything more reasonably interpretative and at the same time more abstract in sensation can scarcely be imagined. His watercolors probably come nearest to "realization" of all his work.

But that Cézanne, as he admitted, never fully realized himself is in the long story of French painting of little moment, when compared with his actual achievement and its influence upon future progress. For his work involves a feeling of magnitude and profound significance such as no other modern painter has attained.

## THE STORY OF FRENCH PAINTING

It is these qualities that have impressed the younger generation and may yet enable it to construct solidly and for long time a “bridge across conventional routine, by which impressionism (and neo-impressionism also) may return to the Louvre and the life profound.”

THE END

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